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CATHERINE DE MEDICIS,

OR

THE RIVAL FAITHS.

"Time steals unheard away, and brings to light
Things dark. - - - -
All things may be — A future day shall break
Our surest oaths, and make the strongest weak.
We, who but late had steel'd our hearts, are bent
E'en by this woman's wiles, and now repent."

"The very torches that, at fall of night,
Shed their bright radiance o'er the bridal room,
Those very torches, with the morning's light,
Led the deluded victims to their doom."

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY WARD,

This Volume,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT,

AND

REGARD FOR HER FRIENDSHIP,

IS INSCRIBED,

BY

HER LADYSHIP'S DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Mount Radford, Exeter,
April, 1834.

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CATHERINE DE MEDICIS,

OR

THE RIVAL FAITHS.

CHAPTER I.

It was towards the close of the unhappy reign of Francis the Second of France, that Catherine de Medicis' long-smothered ambition began to emit fitful gleams of that baneful glory, which afterwards blasted the country it illuminated and deceived. She had long remained an apparently indifferent spectator of the distracting scenes that were passing around her; and left Francis a willing tool in the hands of the powerful Princes of Lorraine, who, after his marriage with their ill-fated niece, Mary of Scotland, assumed an unlimited control over the king, and presumed to treat with neglect the Queen

mother, — ignorant of the bold and revengeful spirit that breathed beneath the garb of dignified calmness, which characterised Catherine alike in all the varied trials of her eventful life. Seeing that Francis was rapidly declining, and that his short reign was drawing to a close, she watched, with anxiety and caution, for the means to establish herself in an exalted station, where her active genius might have liberty to display its power, when Francis should cease to live, and his crown devolve upon his brother Charles, who was yet too young to be influenced by the ambition of either party. Anthony de Bourbon, King of Navarre, and his brother, Louis, Prince of Condé, were the only check, during the reign of Francis, upon the insolent ambition of the Guise; who, however, professed to regard Condé as an enemy to his country, chiefly from his well-known partiality to the Protestants, who were then mainly suffering from the superstitious zeal and persecuting spirit of the Cardinal of Lorraine. Upon a false charge of plotting against the life of the

king, the Prince of Condé was suddenly arrested, and after a partial and hurried trial, he was basely condemned to die. The Princes of Lorraine, believing that their hated rival's downfal was inevitable, boasted that "at two blows only they could cut off the heads of heresy and rebellion." And thinking that their power was indisputably fixed, they ceased to treat Catherine with even the external show of deference. With a cold eye, and calm brow, she marked their exultation,—and sending secretly for the Admiral Coligni, and his brother, the Cardinal de Chatillon, she was concerting with them the escape of the Prince of Condé, when intelligence was brought of the sudden illness with which Francis was seized on his return from the chase. The informer of this unlooked-for event was the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, and he immediately advised the queen, as the only means to secure the regency, (which by right belonged to the king of Navarre, as first prince of the blood), not to hasten the fate of Condé, but to spare him to serve as a counterpoise, for the future, to the

threatened overwhelming power of the bold house of Lorraine. Catherine felt the soundness of De l'Hôpital's counsel, and scarce doubting that Francis lay on his death-bed, she did not hesitate to send for the king of Navarre; and at once denying all participation in the injustice and violence practised on his brother, proposed to unite with him in crushing the rapacity of the Guise; — and giving a security for the speedy liberation of Condé, she received from Anthony in return, his resignation of the regency. Thrusting the paper, that secured her power for the future, into her bosom, Catherine commanded that the young queen, who was gone to attend a masquerade at Blois, should be kept ignorant of Francis' danger; and that neither the Duke of Guise, nor the Cardinal of Lorraine, should be admitted within the miserable apartment, where the king was laid when first attacked, and where he was allowed to languish in lonely dejection the last few hours of his short and troubled life.

It was the evening of the second day of his

sufferings, before Catherine could tear herself, for a few moments, from her ambitious schemes to visit Francis in his low and gloomy chamber. There every thing announced the coldness of parental neglect.

The Queen, as she entered, threw a rapid glance towards the bed on which Francis lay; a strong expression of disappointment rested for a moment upon her countenance; the king was sufficiently recovered to be partially dressed, and was sitting nearly upright in the bed. The struggle in her darkened mind was awful and decisive. She asked herself but one question,— could she bear to see her fresh and high hopes blasted? Her whole soul responded, No, — and her resolution was on the instant formed.

"O! mother," exclaimed the King, in reply to her cheering words, "talk no more to me of life: like the evening clouds it is vanishing. I feel that I must die, though I may yet struggle many days with the angel of death, before I am conquered."

Catherine saw that his melancholy arose from

the painful nature of his disorder, and that death was not in his eyes or voice; and making a sign for the attendants to withdraw, she sat on the edge of the bed, and in silence taking the youthful monarch's wasted hand, looked steadily at him, whilst the big tears of pain rolled over his wan cheeks, and fell in large drops upon her hand. After a long pause, she arose, and looking half fearfully around the dim apartment, slowly walked to the open lattice, and for many minutes stood absorbed in a thought that blanched her lips, and made her whole frame tremble. Dashing the cold drops from her brow, she again approached the bed. The last rays of the fading twilight fell upon the pale countenance of the prince: his mother paused, and passed her hand across her brow. "Yet—should he live—be it but one day longer, I am lost," she mentally exclaimed. Before Catherine left him, in a low voice she chanted the Veni Creator, and bidding him pray to St. Francis, and repeat the penitential psalms, she promised to send a priest to console his last

moments; bending over him she kissed his damp brow, whispering "Farewell." But Francis shrunk from the chilling touch of her cold, and trembling lips: thrusting her from him with convulsive force, and in silent horror turning his head away.

Catherine stood by, her eyes fixed upon his ghastly countenance, till roused by the entrance of her own confessor, Father Ambrose; then starting from the bed, she pointed to the Prince, and with a melancholy and thoughtful air left the apartment.

CHAPTER II.

On the floor of her chamber, in the splendid palace of the Guise, refusing all consolation, lay Mary Stuart, the widowed Queen of France. Her head rested on her clasped hands, and her rich dark hair fell in wild disorder over her neck. Her grief for the time knew no bounds, for she and Francis had loved each other, with a deep affection, and she felt that his death had suddenly deprived her of all she most valued upon earth. Young, beautiful and enthusiastic, she had but tasted of happiness, when it fled from her for ever. With the death of Francis Mary's varied and severe trials commenced. This she quickly experienced; for soon after his interment, she was hurried to the gloomy monastery of St. Peter's at Rheims, of which René of

Lorraine, her mother's sister, was the lady abbess, and there she spent in dull solitude, (her lively imagination could but ill support,) the last year of her sojourn in her mother's native land, which she loved with the ardour of a young and grateful mind, who had expérienced its generosity, shared its seducing pleasures, and felt the richness of its natural beauties. The fear of offending the Guises, who were too powerful not to be dreaded, although no longer supported by the Crown, alone withheld Catherine from urging Mary's immediate return to Scotland. Concealing her real feelings, she conciliated the Duke of Guise, by her affected regard for the young Queen Dowager, who courteously received all Catherine's hollow attentions, but was too clear-sighted to be deceived by them, and too prudent to express her disgust. But no artifice on the part of Mary could blind Catherine to induce a meeting between the young King Charles, who was a boy of much talent and spirit, and the beautiful widow of his brother. There was nothing Mary more ardently

wished, than to become as dear to Charles, as she had been to Francis; and with this hope she continually endeavoured to delay her return to Scotland. In the mean time, Catherine de Medicis, who had been appointed to the regency, soon found that her high office did not bring with it the full power she had anticipated. She saw that it required all her address, though invested with regal honours, to maintain a superiority over the haughty and jealous Peers who surrounded, and filled the court. Indifferent to the melancholy consequences which must result from civil wars, she now only sought to secure her own interests; and with industrious art fomented troubles, and discord, which kept the nobles ever watchful and active; and thus increasing their mutual distrust, she made the hatred, which already existed between the Huguenots and Catholics, at once deadly and furious.

Catherine's first step, on coming to the regency, was to honourably acquit the Prince of Condé of all the imputations laid to his charge

during the life-time of Francis. She even induced the Duke of Guise and him to embrace in her presence, and at the same time promise to forget all past animosities. But they mutually understood that their friendship was feigned, and continued to regard each other with scorn, and deep-rooted aversion. Condé's bold spirit could not brook even the semblance of superiority in the Guises, and he impatiently watched for an opportunity, openly to oppose his formidable rivals for ascendency. Catherine, for her own purposes, fostered in Condé those angry feelings which were debasing to his great mind, by expressing her dread of the usurping ambition and arbitrary temper of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and the undaunted spirit of his brother Francis. As the only means of humbling their formidable house, she promised to assist the Reformers, and assured Condé, who had declared himself their champion, that from her heart, she lamented the violence the followers of Calvin had hitherto suffered, and that in secret she approved of their tenets, and would

support them to the utmost of her power. Condé believed her, and felt elated with the hope of beholding, ere long, a pure religion grow and flourish in his native land, in spite of the violence and bigotry of the church of Rome. His true and generous soul could not for one moment imagine the real deformity of that spirit, which lied so boldly to him,—and to his enemies, the Guises, strongly deplored the increasing influence of the Huguenots, and with rarely shown vehemence, affirmed it to be her first wish to extirpate them, and depress their leaders.

The wily Regent at last felt satisfied, that her address had made each party believe her willing and able to befriend them in their war upon each other, which she hoped would soon engage in deadly strife, all who were checks upon her throbbing ambition, at least until she were firmly seated on a throne of absolute power, and could command a peace at her own bidding. The Guises she only feared, and sought to engage their attention from herself, for a time;—but the Huguenots she hated, and nourished a per-

sonal dislike to the Princes of the blood, and the Colignis, who were the supporters of the reformed religion. Her arts at length succeeded, and kindled a deadly war; but she had overcalculated her strength, when she believed that at her will, peace could be restored to her distracted country.

Catherine lived to witness the direful effects of her deceitful schemes — to see that her dissimulation became the foundation only of misery, — to feel that its baseness had subjugated her own great mind to its demeaning sway, and tainted many a noble breast beside. It is said, that she scoffed at misery, and none believed that she could feel the horrors of a degraded sinful spirit; — but it was in secret that such as Catherine de Medicis would shed tears of baffled ambition, or burning drops of remorseful sorrow.

CHAPTER III.

Edessa de Breteuil stood highest in Mary of Scotland's estimation, far above the Scottish damsels, or the sprightly beauties of France, who delighted to divert her mind from melancholy thoughts, during the comparative solitude of Rheims, which the young queen was compelled to observe, after the death of Francis. It was in vain that the wayward Mary determined to dislike Edessa on her arrival at the monastery of St. Peter's: she soon found it was impossible, or at least it was not in her nature to resist her gentleness, although she came strongly recommended to her favour by the abhorred Catherine, — and Edessa's father, the rich and powerful Marquis de Louvois, had always been one of the most active opposers of the arrogant

and overbearing pretensions of the house of Lorraine. But Mary's heart, unjust as it was in many instances, here did ample justice to its own best feelings, and the merits of the being who inspired her with an ardent and lasting affection. Edessa de Breteuil, soon became mistress of the young queen's most secret thoughts, and with the truth of friendship extolled what was great and good, but was silent touching the faults she could not remedy, in one she at once loved and pitied.

When the time was fixed for Mary to leave Rheims, to proceed to Paris, before she finally quitted France for her own kingdom,—in order to spare herself the pain of asking a favour personally of Catherine when they met,—she wrote from Rheims, requesting from the Regent, as a last favour, permission for Edessa to accompany her to Scotland. Catherine, in reply, regretted being obliged to refuse the Queen Dowager's request, saying, that she could not ask so great a sacrifice from one of her most attached nobles, a that of allowing a wide sea to roll between

him and his only child, particularly as she was doubly necessary to his heart's peace, since he had lost his wife, and stood alone in the world of domestic comforts, with the daughter of his love only to cheer him, when his thoughts would with melancholy constancy revert to past scenes of pure happiness, that never could again be felt, since she, who had shared and bestowed them, was no more.

The Queen's mortification and disappointment at this refusal of her request were extreme. Her pride took the alarm, and she affected to treat with indifference the denial which wounded her to the quick. Remembering with bitterness the strong terms of entreaty she had used in writing to Catherine, she mentally upbraided herself for having been so weak as to ask any thing from the woman she hated. With a scornful smile, she tore the letter in two pieces, and handing them to Edessa, told her to burn them after she had read as much as she liked, carelessly observing, every thing that came from the Queen mother was hateful to her; then turning to

Mary Livington, one of her Scottish ladies, she proposed letting "la belle Galatine," her favourite Falcon, enjoy a little sport, for the last time near Rheims.

Edessa, when she had read the Regent's letter forbore to express the feelings it awakened, seeing that Mary was in one of those harassing tempers, to which, much to her prejudice, she through life occasionally gave way. It seemed a mixture of levity, and malice, which, whilst the fit was upon her, delighted to distress the feelings, good or bad, of those she selected as marks for her spleen, or satire. Turning to Edessa, she asked her to sing until la Galatine was ready, and would have insisted on her doing so, had not her attention been diverted by Mary Livington, who came running in, exclaiming, "O my liege, the astrologer Fulda is at the convent gate; shall she be admitted? The Queen with an animated expression nodded assent, and throwing herself upon a couch, played with a beautiful Italian greyhound, until Mary Livington re-appeared, followed by a tall elderly

woman who was clothed in a long dark habit, which fell in ample folds over her thin form, and was secured by a broad belt round her waist, from which hung a golden rosary almost reaching the ground. She wore on her head a black, low-crowned hat, in which was fixed a small, and curiously-carved silver cross. — Her features were still handsome, though much hardened by time and exposure to the sun. Her eyes were dark, large, and deeply set, capable of every expression; her lips were wasted, and compressed, it would seem, from mental troubles. She looked, in her general bearing, like one who had once suffered deeply, but now defied the sorrows of life, and no longer sighed for the pleasures of mortality. Mary involuntarily saluted her as she entered. But Fulda, taking no notice of the Queen's courtesy, after looking at her for a moment, fixed an earnest gaze on Edessa, who was standing a little behind the Queen. Mary, piqued by the neglect, said contemptuously, "So you consult the stars, do you?"

"Yes," replied Fulda abruptly answering the

question she deemed superfluous; "but I warn you, seek not to know any thing concerning your own fate."

"And suppose I disregard your warning, and wish to know my destiny, will you tell it to me?"

"Aye."

"What, have you already read my guiding star?"

"I have."

"Be not so great a niggard of your words; speak, tell me what you saw, from first to last: 'tis clouded now, I'll warrant, though it has shone brightly, and will again, or I am no Queen."

"Madame, when I first saw your ruling star, it was through a mist so thick—"

"That is, true," interrupted the Queen; and addressing Edessa, she continued — "My lips were first moistened by the tears of my widowed mother. — Woman proceed, what next?"

"It slowly rose above the vapour, and for a space shone in the clear blue heavens, when suddenly a dark cloud came sweeping along the

sky, and enveloping the bright star, hid it from my searching gaze."

"Why do you pause? — What next?" asked Mary, with superstitious and eager curiosity.

"I never saw that star clearly again; cloud succeeded cloud in rapid and stormy succession, — sometimes totally hiding it from sight, — yet it long struggled to get free; — but at last" —

"But at last," — what? Speak, woman; dost hear? Speak."

"I saw thy star, proud queen, set behind a ruined tower."

"Away! it was not my star ye saw. I will hear no more. — Come, Livington, is la belle ready for play? Come, Edessa, you must be with us."

As the queen left the apartment followed by all but Fulda, Edessa was about to steal for a few moments to Mary's oratory, to offer her thanks to the Virgin for the good account she had that day received of her father's health, when Fulda advanced towards her, and closing the door, in a low voice asked her, where Raymond de Moreau then was?

Edessa coloured deeply, and replied, that she believed he was at Paris.

" Who then brought the Regent's answer to the Queen ?"

" I do not know,—Raymond was charged to return, but he has not."

" And you, Edessa, regret his absence."

" You know, Fulda, that I do."

" O maiden : if it be not too late, withhold your affections from that youth."

" It is too late,—death only could sever our hearts."

" If it be so, till death you will be miserable."

" If such be the will of God, I will bend to it, —but I will not heed your dark predictions, for I scarce believe that a mortal can penetrate the thick veil which hides the future will of Providence."

" Maiden, do you not know that I love Raymond de Moreau : and have I ever deceived you ? or been faithless to one of your house ?"

" No,—never."

" Nor do I deceive you now.—Farewell."

CHAPTER IV.

CATHERINE expressed both anger and disappointment, when the Marquis de Louvois, with a decision foreign to his usual character, refused to give his consent to a union she had long contemplated between his daughter Edessa, and her gallant favourite, Victor d'Espernon, who was the only son of the rich and powerful Oswald d'Espernon, Marquis d'Ostun. She argued that Victor, who was aspiring and noble-minded, would be sure to add fresh honours to Louvois's already distinguished family; and that such an alliance would place Edessa among the highest, most happy, and envied of her sex.

Renhault replied, that he had but little desire to see his daughter envied,—to behold her happy

was his chief wish, and therefore he had fully sanctioned her betrothment to her kinsman, Raymond de Moreau, a youth in every sense worthy of her. It was true, (having lost his parents whilst an infant,) he had been deprived by fortune of his inheritance, but he was a frank and noble youth, and had ever shared with Edessa his affections, even yet more deeply after the death of the Marquise, who was nearly related to Raymond's mother, and in dying had recommended him to her husband's care.

Catherine, said no more, but at once determined to blight their hopes, whilst yet in their early strength and freshness. She felt doubly annoyed at Renhault's refusing to oblige her in this particular point, as Victor had long passionately loved Edessa, and she had confidently promised her to him. At this juncture, Raymond, full of gaiety and hope, arrived from Rheims with the Queen-dowager's letter to the Regent, requesting that Edessa and he might accompany her to Scotland.

Raymond, who had been educated in great

seclusion with Edessa, at the Chateau de Louvois, which was situated in a small village a few leagues from Paris, had not yet been introduced at Court; and as the Marquis always opposed his being often at Paris, he was but little known beyond La Bouquet, and his chief friends were among the monks of St. Gervase, a neighbouring convent.

Anxious to see Catherine, instead of going to La Maison de Renhault, he, immediately on his arrival, proceeded to the Louvre, and presented the Queen's letter to the haughty Regent, who, instead of breaking the seal, gazed at Raymond until she became deadly pale, and with a hurried voice and manner, asked his name. In a few moments, recovering her self-possession, she sent for Louvois, and telling Raymond in a harsh tone of voice to withdraw, gave him a look so full of hate as he bent before her, that it terrified from his breast at once all hope of rising by courtly favour.

As he passed by the anti-chamber, full of wonder and suspicion at what could have

caused the Regent's strange emotion the moment she beheld him, Victor d'Espernon entered by an opposite door, and as he passed Raymond, the sheath of his sword struck him on the leg. Raymond stept back as if waiting for an apology, they were unknown to each other, but each was evidently struck by the stately and proud deportment of the other. Raymond stood stiff with pride, his eyes flashing with ready indignation: there was anger too in Victor's eyes; but bowing with courtly grace in acknowledgment of the unintended affront, he passed on.

Before he left the Louvre, Raymond met Louvois on his way to obey the hasty summons to attend the Queen. There was no time for explanation; but the Marquis instantly guessed why he was so suddenly sent for; and in some degree prepared, he calmy entered Catherine's chamber of audience, and for a long time endeavoured to evade her decided questions, but it was in vain: she would be satisfied, and insisted upon clear and plain replies. Louvois finding it was impossible to escape without sacrificing

truth, at length related all that he knew of Raymond and his unfortunate parents.

Catherine, concealing the impression the Marquis's narration had made upon her, thanking him for his candour, and making him promise still to keep Raymond in ignorance of his real descent, she expressed a wish to be left alone; but Renhault had scarce departed, when Catherine dispatched a messenger to request the immediate presence of Oswald d'Espernon.

CHAPTER V.

Oswald, Marquis d'Ostun, was one of Catherine's most retiring, but firm friends. He was a man of a gloomy and morose temper, shunning all social intercourse with the nobles and gentlemen, with whom he was constantly coming in contact, from his frequent attendance at court; but he pertinaciously exacted from every one the high respect which he considered due to his rank, riches, and the esteem Catherine had ever expressed for him; though none could tell why the Queen showed him such distinguished favour, for there were many whom she comparatively neglected, who were much more affluent and less niggardly than Oswald.

Some imagined that her partiality arose from his having once risked his life to save that of King Henry the Second, her late husband: but

gratitude had no place in Catherine's heart: and it was well known that she and Henry had been indifferent to each other. A few thought that his being so devout a Romanist, and withal so strange a man, had given him a certain unaccountable interest in her eyes; but be it what it may, there was a mysterious understanding between Catherine and her ruffian noble, which all saw, but none could fathom,—some secret of dark import,—some harassing fact which kept them in constant awe of each other. She consulted him upon most measures, and it was supposed that from his counsel, she borrowed much of that decision and cruelty which marked and stained her administration.

Oswald had one redeeming virtue: the anxious affection he had always manifested for his only son, Victor d'Espernon, who was a young man possessing many endearing qualities, joining to an unusually reflective and steady mind, a buoyant and lively temper. He was deeply attached to his father, though his very reverse in character and person.

Victor's sense of honour was morbidly acute, and his pride incapable of being alloyed with vanity or meanness: his friends were warmly attached to him; but he had many bitter enemies, for his prejudices were violent, and to those he disliked he was satirical and unbending.

Time, however, showed that Victor could also be vindictive, and long bear enmity. Strongly tinctured with the superstitions of the times, he smothered the doubts which occasionally rose in his mind, as temptations from Satan; and placing implicit confidence in the tenets of the Roman Church, he scrupulously observed the forms and ceremonies she enjoined, He was a great favourite with Catherine, though presuming on his father's unaccountable influence over the Queen, (which astonished him as much as it did all who beheld it,) he preserved a will independent of hers, and often resolutely opposed her schemes.

One morning, a few days after Catherine's last interview with the Marquis de Louvois, Victor, who was alone with the Regent, made

some acute observations relating to the political state of the kingdom. Catherine, who was struck by the justness of his remarks, encouraged him to give his opinion upon a subject she had till then forbidden, and carrying on the conversation with much spirit, she unguardedly mentioned her intention of entering into coalition with the Prince of Condé and the Huguenots, to counteract the opposition of the strong party, which, headed by the Guises, threatened to overthrow her but yet weakly established power.

Victor was astonished at the duplicity of the measure; and not regarding the emergency of the case, from a high principle of rectitude, opposed the perfidy that would dupe even those, whom, from a mistaken sense of religion, he regarded as determined foes.

The argument was carried on with much art on one side, and warmth on the other. Catherine continually parried his objections, by saying —"Well, no matter now, — the time will come when you will think as I do, — or at least, we shall act in concert; and that will do."

Victor protested, and Catherine smiled, whilst dark thoughts were passing through her mind. By degrees ambitious and sinful musing was changing her conscience to stone. Whilst her eye was fixed on the beautiful lustre which pure and honourable feeling kindled in Victor's animated countenance, she sedulously meditated how to extinguish its brilliancy and energy for ever.

He advanced to make his parting obeisance, and as he knelt on one knee before the Queen, he said,—"Madam, your confidence has bound me to silence in this affair, and my conscience bids me withhold the right hand of fellowship from those whom the holy church denounce as enemies to God: I must, therefore, beg your majesty to take from me the post in the royal army, your generosity has so lately bestowed, and allow me for the present to remain passive."

"No," replied Catherine, "I will not accept your resignation: if ye were idle, Francis of Guise would tempt you,—he has more influence with Louvois, I will warrant, than I have.—

Ah, that is well thought on,—Lady Edessa, my lord, is lost to you."

"I entreat you, madame, distress me not so many ways at once," exclaimed Victor, rising and looking anxiously at Catherine.

"To be plain, Victor, there is no longer any hope for you; the maiden is beloved by Raymond de Moreau."

"I scorn such a rival, madame. — Raymond de Moreau! who is he? — a mere boy without rank, wealth, or renown," cried Victor, contemptuously. "Edessa can never regard him with lasting favour, nor can I with fear."

"Be patient," said Catherine, "and I will tell you *who he is*, and that is more than Edessa, or he, or Louvois yet know."

She seated herself, as she spoke, by a table, and tearing a leaf from her tablets, slowly wrote on it a few lines, and handed the paper to the wondering and unsuspecting Victor.

The words she had written, had an effect upon him as instantaneous and terrific as an electric shock. — He sprung back, and gasping

with suffocating agony, held the fatal paper in his clenched hand, whilst Catherine's eye roamed anxiously about, in quest of the evidence her pen had given, of a fact she could not trust her tongue to utter, totally regardless of the cruel pangs she had heedlessly inflicted upon Victor's noble heart. At length, partially recovering from the stunning blow, he prepared in silence to depart. — She held out her hand for the paper saying, "*Give it to me.*"

He answered with a look of horror;—and he, who scarce an hour before, had entered the palace with the gay and lively air of happy freedom, left it, with a heavy step and unconscious eye, passing alike his friends and his foes.

CHAPTER VI.

All was prepared to hasten Mary's departure for her native, though but little loved Scotland. Catherine, on her arrival at Paris from Rheims, affected to forget all hostilities, and repaired to the palace of the Duke of Guise, to express by personal attention, her sincerity in wishing that every possible respect should be paid to the late Queen of France. But she could not deceive Mary, who found it difficult to conceal her feelings of disgust and disappointment, when, on being informed that Charles had been sent to Blois, she understood that it was to avoid the possibility of their meeting; and could scarcely command herself to greet with courtesy his brother, the young Duke of Anjou, left to apologise for his absence. With mingled feelings of bitterness and tenderness, she listened

to the expressions of regret, admiration, and devotion which continually met her ear from the generous and gallant throng her wit, beauty and misfortunes drew around her. She struggled to hide from herself that all was flattery, and tried to renew the elevating hope, that the chain was yet unbroken, which had united as one nation, the French and Scots. She could not believe that the people who now seemed to adore her, would, in a few short years, scarcely sigh when they heard of her wrongs, and be coldly silent at her cruel death. Feeling sure that she was beloved, it softened her regret.

It was a glowing evening in July, the last that Mary saw in Paris, when she stole for a short time, from the gaiety which surrounded her, and sat apart with Edessa in the balcony of her own apartments, which commanded a view of the fragrant and magnificent gardens of le Palais de Lorraine. Neither spoke; they seemed to be listening intently to the chanting of the weary birds' departing hymn, which the air, loaded with the rich perfume of night-flowers, wafted

from a neighbouring grove. But the calm music, and the soft breeze were alike unheeded: each felt that they must part,—and breathed heavily as the time drew near. Edessa could better endure the trial than the Queen, who had not yet been taught, by stern adversity, the humility of patient resignation. But from an early age Edessa seemed to have a presentiment of the evils which awaited her in life; and from each joy or sorrow extracted honey like the patient bee flying from flower to flower, gathering from each a healthy store of strength and sweetness, to resist and cheer the dark and stormy winter of existence.

As the last red light of day faded into the mellow fullness of early night, Mary, pushing aside the dark locks from her pale brow, fixed her eyes on the evening star which yet lingered in the west, and as it sunk, in a low voice said. "It went most calmly down;"—then turning to Edessa, she suddenly exclaimed, "O Edessa! no exiled Grecian ever felt a keener grief when wandering from his home, than I do

in leaving you and France: my happiness is gone; I am full of despair!"

"My beloved mistress! the faithful should never despair: remembering the promises of God, their steady gaze should pierce through the darkness which the evils of life fling around; and in the heavens ever behold the bow of mercy, and the bright star of faithful hope."

"You speak like a father confessor, maiden: but you are right. If my spirit prayed oftener I should be nearer heaven, and happier.—Alas! I am a poor sinner; grief wears my body, but does not benefit my soul. Hark! — I hear music, — well, let them dance, I will not to the fête to night. O, I am sick of noise, and pomp, and show."

"Aye, and so am I," replied Edessa; "the vanities and luxuries of life never appear more vain than when we are in sorrow: then we incline from them to God; for truly grief is the blind which his mercy draws to exclude that which is perishable, from being adored by the light of the Spirit."

"And how madly I have adored them!" exclaimed Mary; "I have seen my valued joys glitter and pass away like transient meteors, leaving no trace behind. Your sky, Edessa, may be studded with constant stars; but mine is dark, till some false light blaze again athwart its blackness. My name is Mary Stuart, — and in Scotland is my throne; — there is a sad history of the past, — why should I escape? — Fulda, — you prophesied well."

"Can the predictions of a weak mortal exclude from your soul a confidence in God?" asked Edessa. The queen remained silent, with a bitter smile impressed upon her countenance, angrily musing, until roused from anxious thought by the soft and melancholy breathings of a lute, which rose from a dew-besprinkled bower close below the balcony. Edessa, who had not seen Raymond since her return to Paris, nor could account for his absence, leant over the balcony, and fixing her eyes upon the fragrant shade, (she hoped, concealed her lover,) listened to the full yet sad tones, none but he, she thought, could make so lovely, and so touching.

"Did you ever hear sweeter music, maiden?" whispered the queen; — "listen, he sings: 'the patron of the silver bow' could not sing in clearer, softer numbers."

Edessa listened; but the voice was not Raymond's, and the spell was broken. — Not the slightest sigh revealed what was passing in her mind, but almost sick with disappointment, she rested her head on her hand, giving little attention to the musician or to Mary, who, by the light of the rising moon, saw the shadowy form, half concealed by the flowers of her own favourite bower. Her eyes flashed with wild uncertain joy, — and her heart trembled, whilst she seemed scarcely to breathe, as she listened to words, she well knew were meant for her alone to hear.

Why pant, my heart? Ah, sorrow, tell me!
Now its soft pulsations move
Every throbbing thought to quell thee,
Lest I dare to breathe my love.

Love's emotions find communion
'Mid the gentle shepherd's train;
But when hearts can't beat in union,
Then the pulse may throb in vain.

Farewell! — since other climes now claim thee:
Other hearts may prove less true:
A fond farewell! — thou can'st not blame me,
Should this heart still beat for you.

The music ceased, but Mary, still bending forward, listened,—distant sounds of revelry rudely burst the spell; and starting, as one suddenly roused from a delicious dream, to the roughness of reality, she turned to Edessa, — who replied, — "It was thrilling and enchanting music. — I think I know the voice: — is it Chatelard?"

"None but he could sing like Chatelard," — answered Mary in a deeply sorrowful tone: "alas! — I fear Scotland cannot afford such sounds, — no delight for the senses."

"May it not then be better for the mind?" said Edessa.

Mary stood on the deck of her galley in silent dignity, — her eye still fondly lingered on the shore she loved, — and as the slight breeze slowly drove on the vessel, she thrice waved her

hand to Edessa, who, with many a noble lord and lady, stood upon the strand, watching, till night hid from their bedewed eyes, the vessel which conveyed from them for ever, the beloved and admired Mary Stuart.

CHAPTER VI.

Raymond de Moreau, as he was generally named, from the moment his existence became known to Catherine, was to her an object of solicitude, anxiety, and hatred. She perceived that his character was bold and haughty, protecting his own honour; whilst the Marquis de Louvois watched over his welfare with parental care, and redoubled caution, since he had been compelled to reveal to her the secret that involved Raymond's earliest years. She pondered over, and by turns rejected many dark schemes, to rid herself of one, who might, if permitted to live, one day unroll the fatal scroll that could make known the guilt and treachery of her early years,—a guilt which was of so hideous a nature, that, hardened as she now

was to every sin, she, from the remembrance and shame of this first crime, recoiled with the bitter after-taste, of the horror that then overwhelmed her. At length, in concert with Oswald d'Ostun, a deep-laid plot was duly matured and planned; the issue was scarcely doubtful. Raymond, young, inexperienced and ardent, she guessed must fall into the snare; and then, she thought, "he must be more than mortal, to escape my secret hate, concealed under the heavy robes of jealous bigotry." Raymond was accordingly dispatched (the same morning that Mary arrived from Rheims) with letters of political importance to La Paix, the favourite retreat of the Prince of Condé, near his castle of Noyers, in Burgundy, whither he and the Admiral Coligni were enjoying a short repose, whilst waiting for the promised negociation, to arrange matters for the suppression of the faction headed by the Duke of Guise, and the Constable Montmorenci. Catherine also, in a private billet to the Prince of Condé who was one of the most fascinating and accomplished men of the age, strongly re-

commended Raymond to his notice,—observing that he was a youth well worthy of the Prince's favour and conversation during his detention at La Paix.

Raymond, buoyant with hope and spirit, prepared for his hasty departure: but the Marquis de Louvois, with moody discontent, asked why one so young was sent to the stronghold of the heretics. And fervently recommending him to the care of St Peter and his patron saint, he prepared to keep the secret of Raymond's absence from Edessa, whilst the entertainments given in honour of the Queen of Scotland should cause a greater freedom of intercourse between all ranks and parties than ordinary.

None had anticipated the arrival of the young Queen and Edessa, with deeper delight than the gay and brilliant Victor d'Espernon; but they had come, and Mary had again departed, ungreeted and unattended by her former gallant and witty courtier; but a heavy weight had fallen upon the elastic spring of hope and love, changing the buoyant nature of the once happy

Victor, to a sadness nearly allied to despair. Often he was to be seen, his eyes fixed upon the ground, slowly bending his way over le Pont Neuf, to the venerable Cathedral of Notre Dame, and there, prostrating himself before the image of St. Michael, he would with long and fervent prayer seek to lessen the load of misery which hung upon his breast. None could account for the change, yet no one dared to question him, his silence was so stern and fixed.—Oswald for many days watched him with jealous and foreboding anxiety: at length, no longer able to suppress his feelings of alarm and doubt,—he demanded why he was so estranged and so altered?—Victor, stung by the asperity and harshness of his father's voice and manner, tauntingly replied,

"The Regent, Catherine, told me a tale, which turned my life's blood to gall."

Oswald turned pale, and starting back, gasped,—"Catherine, did you say?—impossible!"

"It was none other," replied Victor, in a melancholy tone, his eyes bent upon the floor, and his arms folded upon his breast.

"Credulous fool!—do you believe her tale?"

"When my blood boiled with unbelieving indignation, Catherine bid me ask *you*—if she had lied to me."

Oswald paced the room with a rapid but firm step:—furious passions, which he struggled hard to master, swelled his hard features, and glared fearfully in his eyes, as, turning to Victor with a contemptuous smile, he cried,—"Craven-hearted boy!—what do you fear, if I tell you, that the woman, for once, *did not lie*."

"Shame, dishonour, and a foul conscience,"—exclaimed Victor in a voice half stifled with emotion.

"You say truly, boy. My shame would be yours, and my dishonour would wither your fair fame; but, Victor,—why should the hidden sins which belong only to me, and sit lightly on my firmer spirits, press so heavily upon yours?—Away with such follies!—be silent, and remember that, although I am your father, my deeds and thoughts are only mine; you have no part in them."

"O, my father! I share, by knowing, and concealing, your fearful crimes."

"Oswald trembled with rage, and darting forward, for a moment seized Victor by the throat, — but immediately letting go his hold, he retreated, muttering between his closed teeth, "Will you dare betray me?"

Victor covered his face with his hands, but made no reply. Whilst Oswald, in a suppressed voice continued,

"It was for you, — to ensure your happiness, that I did it: — had I had no son, I had not sinned; for you these hands are stained with gore; — for you my peace was wrecked."—

"Stay, — listen to me," — cried Victor; "I never will betray your deathful secret; but never will I share its fruits. O do not kill me by saying that you sinned for me: it is sad to feel that one I am bound to love and honour, has wronged the dead and wrongs the living. But, my father! my only parent; I will not be your betrayer. I will for your sake live in sin, and be silent; but that silence must cease with your breath."

"Has she told you, too, who it is who lives to reproach me?"

"Aye, and it is thrice better to feel, the man I would hate, is he who suffers. He crosses my path, and I must mar his hopes, or sacrifice my own. It would be cruel to oppress him now, — to love him, if I could, hypocrisy."

"Love him! pshaw!—and how can that boy cope in aught with you?"

"He loves, — where I love."

"What then?—has not Catherine promised the maiden to you?"

"Yes,—but Catherine has sullied my hopes: one word from her, and she blasts my honour; I am no longer free, but must, through fear, live her slave."

"Not so; — you are free; — I hold a check upon that proud and wayward spirit. She dare not betray you or me.'

"And shall we trust her? O my father, why not make atonement for the past, by doing justice to the living?"

"Victor, I cannot; — say no more, — I cannot, — I will not."

"You said it was for my sake that you stained your honour: — for my sake, — for your own, I now supplicate you to cleanse your name from the foul blottings of guilt: — hug no longer your secret crimes; heed not the world's laugh nor scorn; do justice, — or I am miserable."

"Be miserable, then, weak fool! whilst I breathe I will be only what I am, and leave to you, when I am no longer among the living, to expose my errors, hack my renown, and rob my memory of honour. — Yet, mark me! keep silent, on pain of a father's bitterest curse, till I am in my cold grave, — then do as you list."

"Death would soon free your body from the indignities which man's justice would inflict; but O, my father, how shall I bear the thought of your soul's agonies in that dreadful purgatory prepared by offended Heaven for the guilty?"

Oswald appeared to be touched by Victor's

anxious affection, more than he had been for many a long year; tears shone in his softened eyes, and he smote his breast before he could find voice to speak; then in subdued, yet proud accents, he said: —

"Men, Victor, call me impious; but in secret I triumph. Listen. —Thrice I, deemed the scoffer, have been bare-footed, in a pilgrim's garb, from the frontier of France to the shrine of Compostella; thrice I have confessed at Rome, and in horrible silence and solitude, performed bitter penance there; and once I knelt before the Papal throne, and through my gifts, penitence, and devotion, obtained from the holy father of the ever blessed church full absolution for the past. Yet that is not all: — forty priests in Italy, France, and Spain, daily say masses for the souls of the departed; — one-fifth of my wealth I dedicate to the immaculate church; — every night I lie upon the bare floor, and daily live in privation and abstinence. — Will not all this expiate the past? have I any reasonable fear for the future?"

Victor sighed, and passed his hand across his burning brow. — He regarded Oswald for a moment with a softened and melancholy expression; but giving no utterance to the emotion which swelled in his breast, he slowly turned away.

CHAPTER VII.

The young King, Charles the Ninth, possessed many rare and solid virtues, which gave birth to the most sanguine expectations of future happiness amongst all ranks of his subjects.—By nature he was thoughtful, discerning, brave, and generous; but alas! how little fruit did these fine blossoms of a great mind bring to maturity! The untimely death of his preceptor, the Seigneur de la Cipierre, was to Charles and to France a great misfortune; for la Cipierre was a highly gifted and most amiable man, in every respect capable, and inclined to implant and foster the noblest sentiments in the mind of his royal pupil, to whom he was much attached. Catherine alone rejoiced in his death, for his high principles had elevated him far

above her influence or controul. From the death of Francis she had observed, with dismay, the dawning virtues of Charles's mind, and the impossibility of approaching him whilst la Cipierre was near; but when the good governor was no more, Catherine, in her dark and cruel policy, soon fixed upon one to supply his place.

The infamous Albert de Gondi, Marechal de Retz, was a man of ignoble mind, depraved habits, and savage temper. He was capable of every crime. Such was the man the mother selected as the guide of her son.

The first idea of appointing Retz gave her some pangs; it was so horrible,—and ambition had not yet entirely blunted every elevated and natural feeling, and taught her to *hate* Charles as she in after-times did, when he showed a desire to reign alone — she hesitated, and her better feelings struggled long; — but at length, yielding to temptation, Charles became the unhappy victim. The shining qualities of his soul were one by one eclipsed by the corroding rust of vice; — he was taught to be revengeful,

cruel, and idle, — to dissemble, and upon every occasion to use the most horrid oaths and imprecations. He soon became ungovernably violent, and his active mind, preying upon itself, sunk into gloomy discontent and wretchedness. Few and transient were the rays of benevolence and nobleness that were permitted to illumine his dim and terrific reign. His mother, as a fiend, impelling him to evil, ever hovered about him: — she affected, when the work was done, to deplore his vices; but intent only on self-aggrandisement, she cared but little for his present or eternal loss. Leaving him to the guidance of Retz, she conducted herself in political matters with so much caution and ambiguity, as to keep all parties doubtful of her intentions and sentiments towards each. Her situation was full of difficulties and dangers; she dared not use force to attain her wishes, and one false step might hurl her from the station she had only just attained. But refined dissimulation gained all. She publicly affirmed that she belonged to no party, and was only anxious for the general

peace and prosperity of the French people, whilst, in fact, she was equally indifferent to their welfare or miseries, so that the grand aims of her restless mind, to suppress any power that could oppose her own, were accomplished.

To separate the triumvirate, formed by the Duke of Guise, the Constable Montmorenci, and the Marechal de St. André, was her first object. Although then not professedly hostile to her, she saw they were to be feared, if circumstances hereafter should make them so; and to separate their interest, and divert their attention, she determined secretly to fan the flame of civil war, which had been long struggling to burst forth. She began to display her profound hypocrisy first to the Prince of Condé, and the Admiral Coligni, and for some time they were deceived by the falsehood of her flattering promises of support, and good-will towards the cause they so warmly espoused:—and not until they had been repeatedly warned by disappointments and palpable treachery, were they roused

to anticipate the worst, and apply to the Protestant Princes of Europe to assist them to defend their religious rights from the hatred and oppression of their Roman Catholic countrymen.

In the meantime, Condé promised to assist Catherine in her endeavours to weaken the power of her nobles, and remained idle respecting the interest of the Protestants, relying on the speedy fulfilment of the justice promised by the Regent in the dispatches sent by Raymond to him, at La Paix. — Raymond, who had stayed much longer than was necessary, was totally at a loss what reply to give to the Queen, when she angrily asked him why he had lagged on his errand? His embarrassment gave her the greatest satisfaction. "It is as it should be," she thought: "he will soon turn rebel to the faith;" and then, after severely reprimanding him for his want of due promptness in the return from his mission, she asked many distressing questions, relating to what had passed at La Paix. It was in vain that Raymond attempted to evade her subtilty; she would be an-

swered. — It was the first time that he had wished to conceal aught, or trembled whilst speaking the truth. At length the Queen dismissed him, saying,

"You are not fit to serve monarchs if such temptations as those you met with at La Paix could inveigle you from your duty. Go, — and remember that Princes esteem ready obedience as the primary virtue of a good subject."

Raymond bowed lowly, and retired from the presence of the haughty Regent, little thinking of the strict and partial watch she kept over him. Upon quitting the Louvre, he moodily strolled into the Jardin de Joie. — The evening was cold and stormy, and Raymond, leaning against a tree, stood watching the clouds which swept along the darkening sky, and listening to the hollow murmurings of the blast with melancholy pleasure. Indulging the most saddening thoughts, he became almost hopeless, whilst meditating upon his love for Edessa. He felt that a formidable barrier was rising to separate them, and shrunk from the trial he

foresaw was inevitable. — It was deep in the night before his harassing thoughts wore themselves weak, and he could rouse his reason to action, and ask himself, "if his soul could regret the hours spent at La Paix, — where he heard sublime truths of a holy, pure, and christian faith."—"It is worth much peril to attain," he mentally exclaimed, "and, if it must be, a dear, a heavy sacrifice."

CHAPTER VIII.

DURING the early part of Catherine de Medicis' political career, her conscience did not entirely sleep. The strong mental exertion she was obliged suddenly to make, after having remained for many years in comparative apathy, and the unprincipled, and too often cruel measures she deemed necessary to establish herself as supreme, — proved, for a short time, more than even her firm mind and unfeeling heart could bear. It was after she had put every thing in a train to deceive the Protestants, and weaken the triumvirate, and after, too, Charles had shown some frightful proof of the evil that was in his heart, and only required such encouragement as Retz could give, to burst forth, that the Regent, relieved in some degree from public affairs, found that she had time to think quietly of the past.—

One scene of treachery, meanness, and violence after another appeared, until her fast hardening conscience was alarmed, and she became a prey to remorse and superstition. Her health sunk in the conflict. In vain her brilliant genius strove to elevate her guilty mind above despair, — in vain she tried to laugh at sin and its direful train of sorrow : her thirsty mind could nowhere find nourishment, whilst the fever of remorse hung upon her spirits and enchained her energy. For days she shut herself up in a dark room in one of the remotest turrets of the Palace, refusing admittance to any one. At last a general alarm was manifested ; and the young King remained for hours outside the door of the room in which she had imprisoned herself, weeping aloud, and trying, by every affectionate argument, to induce his mother to let him enter and embrace her. But Catherine remained obstinately silent. At length her father confessor, Anthony de Breteuil, found means to enter her presence unbidden. — He stood for some time, unobserved, within the shadow of the door-way,

looking sorrowfully on the blanched and stern features of the lost victim of misused genius, extended upon a low couch, entirely motionless, whilst the strong fire in her eyes told of the fever of thought that raged within, burning up her very life.

The declining day threw its last beams upon her tall majestic form, and just rendered visible the mean and desolate apartment, in which nothing appeared to betoken the magnificent taste of the lofty Catherine. Father Anthony approached the couch, and devoutly crossing himself, held a crucifix before the wildly staring eyes of the disordered queen. — She started as if awaked from an hideous dream, and grasping Anthony's hand, whispered, — "Not here, — I cannot confess here. — *he died in this room:* — to the oratory.".

She started as she spoke, and drawing up her figure to its full height, struck her breast, and pointed to a low and secret door. "Most high in the rank of bitter sensations," she murmured — "is it to feel the mind's decline, and mourn

over its decay." Father Anthony made no reply, but advancing, opened the door; the Queen motioned for him to precede her. After descending several steps, he came to a long narrow passage, which led immediately to Catherine's oratory: it was a small apartment, but dazzling with gold and silver adornments. Six massive tapers were continually burning on each side of the altar, and in the centre stood an exquisitely carved crucifix in white marble, behind which hung a glowing painting, representing the Saviour ascending in glory.

Catherine seated herself on the steps of the altar immediately opposite to the confessional chair in which Father Anthony sat, his eye fixed upon the painting, but evidently struggling to hear with becoming calmness the disclosure of something dreadful. The Queen wore a black velvet cloak, which she held tight to her form, whilst her disordered hair, falling in masses over her shoulders, gave additional horror to her pale countenance, which had now assumed a sullen harshness of expression,

betraying the determined obstinacy of her mind. Her whole demeanour was changed; the softening agonies of remorse appeared suddenly to have given place to the reckless hardness of stern despair. She sat some time in total silence, then slowly raising her head, she fixed an inquiring look upon Father Anthony, who, after a pause replied: — "My daughter, did you not appoint to meet me here, that I might listen to your confession, and give your penitent soul the consolation I am permitted?"

"I did, — but it is folly — you cannot give to me that which I need — I desire peace of soul."

"True, daughter, — I cannot heal your infirmities, but there is one who can cleanse the conscience and purify the heart; — fly to the cross, — lie at the feet of the Redeemer — he will hear, if you cry unceasingly to him for strength to burst asunder the fetters of sin, and break from the thraldom of your evil passions; then, leaving for a brighter the gloomy atmosphere which now surrounds your soul, in faith, it will find peace."

"Avaunt!" cried Catherine; "talk not thus to me, — this world is my all, — I will have no thoughts unconnected with it."

"Most wretched Queen! utter not such treason to your soul, — turn your thoughts from this vile world, and think of the mercy of Christ: talk only of him. Listen to the voice which sings his praise, — to the tongue which glorifies his majesty.—O! ere it be too late, think of the mighty sacrifice, Christ, the paschal lamb.'

"Ha, ha!" laughed Catherine: "Anthony, an unclouded intellect may dwell upon the wonders of redemption, and find in them only perfection. A peaceful conscience, too, may listen to the Creator's praise, and feel rapture;—but the dull in the atonement see no perfection, — and the hymn of praise — O, it is torture, — it thrills the guilty with a thousand pangs!"

"Yet, my daughter, if you would stay and listen."—

"Nay," interrupted Catherine, "I cannot bear such torture:— from henceforth let me hear no more of the joys of contemplation, the

glories of beatitude—of celestial bliss. Ye may behold it, upborne on the wings of intellectual faith,—but my soul, never. I tell you it is chained to this earthly world, — I have clipt its aspiring wings, — and I cannot, I will not contemplate divinity, — it makes me too miserable."

The priest turned pale, and devoutly crossing himself, in a low voice exclaimed, — "Dimness of anguish, — troubles and darkness, must be your portion if you thus turn from Calvary,— for wickedness, unless quenched by the river of mercy, from the blessed mount, — burneth as a consuming fire."

"I feel its devouring flame," muttered Catherine, striking her breast, — "O Anthony, I have no faith in angels, whilst I fear devils !"

"Confess, and pray."—

Catherine made no reply, and sinking her head upon her hand, breathed with difficulty, and struggled hard to suppress the expression of the agony that rent her breast and convulsed every muscle of her distorted countenance.

After a fearful pause, she raised her hands high above her head, and with a bursting groan cried, "My soul is tost in a sea of troubles; I cannot cast anchor, — O, how shall I keep above, and defy the raging waves as they drift me yet further and further from the harbour of peace!"

"It is impossible," exclaimed Anthony: "you must sink, — and, O, reflect, — if now the sense of sin so fearfully oppresses you—what will be your mortal sufferings, if unrepentant ye live on, at that awful time, when, stretched upon a bed of pain, you feel that the season for repentance will return no more, — that your last hour is passing to eternity?"

"Stop!" shrieked Catherine; "the future is too full of horrors for me to dwell upon. I have told you that the present is *my all*, — it is as well tell the church to forego her persecutions, her bigotry, her superstitions, — as me to ponder on what may be my last reflection, — tell me how I may now stifle or appease the memory that haunts, that distracts me."

"Repent, confess, — and pray, then." –

"Peace, thou whining priest, — I will confess no more, to God or mortal man."

Anthony looked sternly at her, and in a low determined voice, asked, — "Though you be silent, — know ye not that God hears and sees always?"

"I know," replied Catherine, in subdued accents, "that I cannot hope to enter heaven,— therefore wish to hear no more of its joys;—but tell me, how shall I burst from the dark cloud which now shrouds me?"

"My daughter, the Sun of Righteousness alone can dissolve the clouds of sin."

"Is there no other antidote for the poison of guilt?"

"What other would you seek? Why do you thus turn with horror from the cup of life? From the physician of souls, who alone can heal the wounds of misery?"

"Is there no penance I can perform? To wash away the memory of that *one act*, I would walk bare footed through France. O, Anthony, I have not breathed the secret that distracts me,—say,

shall I build churches, monasteries, abbeys, raise altars where others may honour HIM I cannot, cannot turn to."

"Churches, nor monasteries, nor altars, nor others' prayers will avail aught. To be saved there is but one way, — Christ is that way."

"Then I am lost. — *Ha, ha! are you too turned heretic?*"

Father Anthony shuddered, and devoutly crossed himself.

"Cannot our holy church give absolution? Then it lies," continued Catherine; — "but no matter, I will learn to steel my spirit against every terror, and defy remorse."

"O Queen! seek not to further harden your heart: conscience, though stifled for a season, will at last be revenged; you cannot destroy its immortal sting."

"It is worth the trial: I know I can blunt, if not destroy it; I have done it already, — aye, often have I listened to the last thunder which shall shake the earth, — and dared to sin whilst it yet muttered in my ear, — but I will think of these things no more."

"How will you live, if you are thus so unfit to die?"

"As I will, — a scourge if it please me,—a curse to many, a blessing to few."

"Can you dare utter such words, dare reveal the darkness of your intents in the presence of the hallowed cross? O wretched woman, again I urge you to confess your crimes, and cry for mercy."

Catherine pressed her hand to her burning brow, and seemed to gasp for life, as she paced the oratory, in an agony of thought; her whole frame trembled, and from time to time loud groans burst from her heavy breast.

"O Anthony!" she cried, "many a dark tale I have breathed in confession here, — but there is one yet untold, too hideous to look upon in thought, too dreadful to tell."

"My daughter, mercy is the choicest attribute of the Godhead, for its healing balm is shed upon the head of the vilest repentant sinner."

"My burning breath would scathe my lips if

I breathed the deathful secret," continued Catherine, without heeding the encouraging consolation. "Yet it shall out, — *it shall be my last confession.*"

She knelt before the priest, and bending her head, crossed her hands upon her bosom, and remained absorbed in mental agony. Her countenance assumed a horrid and ghastly hue; whilst her lips parted, and her jaw trembled with untold horror. The priest hung over her, impatient, yet dreading to listen to the dark confession which could thus torture the blunted, cold, ambitious Queen. But she remained motionless as a statue before him, spell-bound by fearful memory.—At length, in a low impassioned whisper, she muttered the thrilling tale.—The priest sprung from the chair, and in silent horror stood aghast.—Catherine rose from her knees, her eyes were horribly calm, and a deadly paleness rested on her sunken cheeks. She regarded the half fainting priest for several moments, and then with a majestic, yet slow, and melancholy step, left the confessional.

CHAPTER IX.

One evening, after attendance at vespers, Edessa strolled alone into the beautiful gardens of La Maison de Renhault. She felt more than usually depressed, and tears trembled in her mild expressive eyes, as she stood absorbed in thought, looking at the just rising crescent moon. Raymond occupied her mind sleeping or waking; and Edessa painfully felt, that she was giving to a mortal much more than was his due. She constantly prayed to the Virgin Mary, and St Agatha, her patron saint, to wean her from this life, which of late had taken strong hold of her affections, since Raymond seemed destined to struggle amidst its storms, far removed from the peaceful sunny spot where she had fondly hoped they would together have passed their

lives, free from the feverish cares and joys of ambition. But since Raymond's return from La Paix, all dreams of future happiness had by degrees vanished. His friends and companions observed that he was much altered in manner and conversation, that his smile was cheerless, and his gaiety feigned; but to Edessa, he was indeed most strangely altered; he shunned her whenever he could do so, and never addressed her upon the most common subject without embarrassment. Edessa did not question him, or betray the deep anxiety such unexplained conduct caused, but the suppression of her keen feelings flung over her warm and gentle manner a chilling coldness, which made Raymond shrink yet more into himself. At last, the idea that he was infected with the Lutheran heresy burst upon her mind. From that moment the cheerfulness she had maintained, through all, forsook her;—she would for hours, after she had retired to her sleeping room, sit by the window watching the faint light that beamed from his, and with suffocating emotion imagine that she saw

him, with eager anxiety, deeply studying the forbidden tenets of a bewildering heresy. The fearful thought that he would be eternally lost, never left her, every other consideration vanished, — his death, or total separation from herself she could have borne, but she could not contemplate his being an outcast from the holy mother church — one, standing beyond the pale of salvation. Yet as she gazed upon the softly beaming moon, and felt the refreshing breeze, laden with the perfumed breath of flowers, cool the fever burning on her brow and lips, — she encouraged the flattering hope that her fears had raised those dreadful doubts in her breast; and clasping her hands, she audibly prayed that Raymond might be found true to the Romish faith, and that the threatened religious wars might never desolate France.

As she concluded her fervent prayer, Raymond suddenly appeared before her. She started, as if she had seen an apparition, he looked so deadly pale. He in silence took her passive hand, and she felt, as he raised it to his lips, a

burning tear fall upon it. They neither of them could speak; and Raymond, drawing Edessa's hand through his arm, led her into the tall avenue of trees, where they had often, at that hour, met and talked largely of human happiness, and undying love. But now they walked on in silence: both felt that undying love was yet in their hearts,—but human happiness was far beyond their grasp. Raymond trembled from head to foot, and Edessa felt the strong palpitation of his heart as he pressed her hand close to him. On approaching the termination of the grove, they observed some one standing in the doorway of a grotto, watching the waters of a bubbling fountain, in which the silver light of the moon was clearly reflected.

Raymond uttered a low exclamation as he recognized in the stranger the astrologer Fulda;—and was in the act of addressing her, when she looked sternly at him, and turned away. He however dropt Edessa's hand, and instantly darted after Fulda,—crying,—"Stay, or at least tell me where I shall see you again:—you

know all, and so must I, if I perish in hearing it."

"Away, foolish boy!"—cried Fulda, pushing him back, — "I will see you again when it pleases me. Say no more, — and attempt to detain me at your peril." She walked rapidly away as she spoke, and Raymond stood watching her retreating form as long as it appeared in sight. On his return, he found Edessa seated by the fountain telling her beads; — she beckoned for him to sit down by her side, and in a low uncertain voice asked where was his rosary? He made no reply, and after a short pause, she continued, — "We live, Raymond, in troubled times, when religion is made the cloak of faction, and sons, and brothers, and lovers argue till they love no more. But those who have tasted the essence of prayer, and felt the supreme delight of conversing with their God, — though they have no pleasure like that of talking of the high and lovely things which belong unto the Lord, — sicken at the vain arguing, and disquieting converse of mortals on

the mysteries of holy things. Yet, Raymond, I no longer can delay to ask, why the matin and the vesper bells ring in vain for you?" Raymond breathed quickly,—hesitated, and at last, in a hurried voice answered,

"You will not betray me, Edessa;—I am most unhappy, doubting the purity — nay, I am well nigh sure there is falsehood in the Romish faith,—and—"

He was interrupted by a faint cry from Edessa, who, shocked by the confirmation of her worst fears, clasped her hands, and fell fainting to the ground. Raymond bent over her senseless form, and felt that his mortal hopes had received their death blow. But the long-anticipated dreaded moment was past; and though the wound was incurable, the conflict was over.

CHAPTER X.

Edessa did not leave her own apartment for many days after Raymond had confessed to her, in the garden, the secret of his defection from the Romish faith. At first it appeared to her of all things the most unaccountable and dreadful. But, by degrees, she became more reconciled, and began calmly to enquire why so many had renounced the Faith she had been taught to believe immaculate. The inquiry soothed her mind ; she began to regard the Calvinists with diminished horror, whilst she did not love her own religion less. She met Raymond with a melancholy but frank air, — and without hesitation embraced the first opportunity to renew the subject that was nearest to her heart. The Marquis de Louvois had not the

slightest suspicion of Raymond's changed sentiments in religion, for his brother Anthony, to whose care he chiefly confided both Raymond and Edessa, had not once hinted, that he of late had neglected to attend regularly the service of the church, and at the confessional. He therefore attributed his sudden love of solitude, and loss of spirits, to some private disappointment which he thought proper to conceal. The Marquis left him to himself for some time; but at last, annoyed at his silence, he guessed that Raymond's uneasiness arose from a fear that there might be some truth in the general report, that Edessa was eventually to give her hand to Victor d'Espernon; and imagining that Raymond's delicacy, knowing himself to be portionless and not noble, withheld him from expostulating on the injustice which would rob him of his betrothed, — Louvois determined immediately to assure him, that he was incapable of such treachery, and if all were well, when Edessa was of age, they should be united. Raymond was deeply affected by his generous and pa-

ternal conduct. A thousand emotions struggled in his breast, and overcome with gratitude he threw himself upon Louvois' breast, and sobbed aloud. Soon after, Edessa entered the room, and the Marquis putting her hand into Raymond's, abruptly left the apartment. Edessa gently withdrew her hand, and her lover did not attempt to detain it. They both saw the gulf that divided them, and both stood lingering upon the brink. Raymond walked to the window, trying to regain his composure; and Edessa, at once, crushing the weakness that she felt rising to subdue her resolution, advanced to Raymond, saying, "We shall not long be permitted a free intercourse, and must not, therefore, waste the present time. Now, whilst we are alone, tell me, is it possible that you, who have been nourished in the loving faith of our holy mother Church, have turned traitor to her? — denying her purity and her worth, at a time too when she may need support against her bitter and determined foes?"

"Edessa, do not ask me to discuss so im-

portant a point. — I am not calm enough to do myself justice. I hope the time will come when you will cease to blame me."— Edessa kissed the cross, which hung from her neck, and replied, — "I believe that there are some blemishes in the Church, (holy Peter, pardon, if I be in error!) yet why not turn from them, and dwell with love upon her exalted beauties?"

"It is impossible," cried Raymond; "they are defaced,—hidden by the mildew of superstition and falsehood."

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Edessa, turning pale, "you are then indeed far gone in error. — O! Raymond, beware how you burn the essence of religion upon the altars of heresy."

"I will regard your warning, Edessa. I have but half learnt the Huguenot creed; if it be truth, I will boldly avow, and, with the help of Heaven, follow it.—Nay, do not start, I do nothing hastily, and if I adopt the Reformers' tenets it will be from slow conviction, and in pure sincerity. I would not shock you, Edessa, — but

the Romish Church is still, and long has been, involved in the dense clouds of superstition, which have by slow degrees blackened and defiled her. O ! superstition is a deluding sin, full of immorality; leading its victim to place their hopes in, and appease their fears by bodily mortifications; strictly regarding forms and ceremonies, feasts and fasts, — noting with scrupulous care every outward sign of reverence, — exercising the senses, but neglecting the soul: — O, it is easier to scourge the body — to tell the beads, to wear sackcloth, and to lie in ashes, — than to root out one evil passion from the heart, or cleanse the soul of one darling sin."

Whilst Raymond was speaking, Edessa had leant back in her seat and shaded her eyes with her hand, consequently neither of them for some time observed Father Anthony, who stood, as if transfixed, by the door, regarding them with looks of severity and astonishment. When Edessa raised her head, and beheld her uncle's stern countenance, a feeling of indescribable

dread crept over her, and turning pale, she faintly articulated—

"O, Father, he has not spoken heresy."

Raymond, with an expression of terror started back,—and Anthony advancing, placed himself between the unhappy lovers. Both involuntarily bent in silence before him: and Raymond,—it might have been from the force of early habit,—raised the large black cross that hung from Anthony's girdle, and devoutly pressed it to his lips. The priest did not attempt to withdraw it from him, but in a low-toned voice sternly asked,—"Dost thou betray with a kiss?"

The cross dropped from Raymond's hand; a deep flush passed over his pale countenance, and starting from his knees he stood indignantly silent. Anthony, without vouchsafing to notice him, turned to Edessa, and exclaimed,—"Wretched maiden! and you love this apostate,—this traitor to his God!"

Raymond darted forward, and grasping the priest by the arm, in a trembling voice, asked,—

"Do you apply, O my father, — such epithets to me?"

"I do,"—replied Anthony, disengaging himself from Raymond's hold.—"And think not to deceive me,—I know of your secret meetings with the heretics, and of your damning sins.—Be silent, I command it: nor dare to pollute my ears with your subtilties, and vain reasonings. — Edessa — leave us."

"O, my uncle!"

"Were you, maiden, a true daughter of the blessed mother Church, you would not desire to linger here, but would fly with pious horror from the presence of yon pale renegade, though in him you behold the companion of your early youth, and the lover of your riper years. Away! Edessa, — you and Raymond de Moreau must meet no more."

"O, be patient with him, holy father; he will return to the sheltering bosom of our hallowed church, —he will repent,— Raymond, speak,— say that you will repent."

"Of my sins, dearest Edessa," replied Ray-

mond, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "I will, — I do repent;— ask no more of me, — do not urge me to belie my soul. The dreaded storm I have long seen gathering, has at length burst, —we shall be parted, — but O, Edessa! be faithful to me. Believe that no change, — no time, — no peril can diminish my deep, my fervent love; — you are my choicest earthly treasure, —to me the sunshine of a troubled life, —my all in life, —my rest, —my anchor in this world. O then be faithful to me."

Edessa appeared to gasp for life. She in vain struggled to speak her vows of constancy to her first, her only love; — but unable to articulate her strong emotion, she placed her hand upon her heart, and seemed to tear it from her side, and throw it to her lover. Father Anthony angrily caught hold of her extended hand, and pushing the unhappy girl back, exclaimed, "Edessa, will you deny the cross, — dare you vow constancy to a heretic?"

"He is no heretic, — it is to my own noble Raymond that I plight my faith." — She sank

into a chair as she ceased to speak; and covering her face with both her hands, wept in silent anguish. She plainly foresaw the joyless future, and felt already the beginning of a fearful strife between her conscience and her enthusiastic love.

Raymond knelt by her side, watching, with a look of indescribable grief, the tears as they silently flowed,—tears that he dared not, could not wipe away,—though for him they fell so large and fast.

Father Anthony paced the room with an anxious and troubled air; his mind was harassed, and he knew not how to act. Bigotry did not cast its dark shadow over his piety, and in secret he deplored the violence and persecutions of the Romish Church. But a slavish and weak fear of the reigning power, made him conceal his real sentiments, and often give his sanction to measures, his benevolence and clearer knowledge of holy things condemned. Those who knew Father Anthony well, found it impossible not to love him; his heart overflowed with the

"milk of human kindness," and the general expression of his countenance shewed the endearing and christian virtues of his mind. Timidity was, at once, his weakness and his sin. He now feared to follow the dictates of his heart with regard to Raymond, — knowing that the Cardinal of Lorraine was his bitter enemy, and only waited for an opportunity openly to accuse him of favouring the Huguenots.

Father Anthony was for a time totally at a loss how to act. He tenderly loved both Raymond and Edessa: to denounce the former he felt was impossible, yet he made no attempt to convince him of his errors; — nor did the doubting priest dare ask himself why he neglected that, which as a Papist, was his duty. As an only alternative, he at length determined to apply to Catherine for a commission in the Royal army, by which means, Raymond would be effectually separated from Edessa, withdrawn from the secret influence of the reformers,—and compelled to conform, at least, to the Papal forms of worship. Satisfied with this arrange-

ment, Father Anthony, with a calmed manner, approached Raymond, and placing his hand upon his arm, said,

" Do not prolong this melancholy scene ; I cannot in duty leave you, nor can I bear to behold your unhappiness. I will not betray you, Raymond; but promise to converse no more with Edessa."

" Keep his secret, *and I will promise,* father," cried Edessa, starting from her seat, — " we will this moment part : I will see him no more !"

" O Edessa, can you thus promise?" groaned Raymond; whilst he smote his breast, and looked imploringly to heaven.

" Raymond, until you again kiss the cross,— and throw yourself upon the mercy of the holy mother church, we must meet no more. My conscience, my love to you, bids us part; farewell ; it is a sacrifice I owe to my God."

CHAPTER XI.

The civil war, — falsely termed the religious war, (for the true interest of religion was but secondary in the minds of most of the principal actors of either party,) at last broke out with the determined energy of long-suppressed rage; and, fanned by opposition, and strengthened by every violent and malignant feeling, it threatened to involve the whole nation in carnage. Catherine's subtile policy only served to keep the different factions at peace, whilst they were doubting which side she would espouse. No sooner was it discovered that she was deceiving each party, in the vain hope of rising above them before they had quenched their mutual hatred, than both alike defied and trampled upon her orders with contempt; leaving her to contem-

plate, amidst the wild confusion of a divided kingdom, the stern probability of losing that power which had cost, even her wicked mind, so much to attain. Alarmed, but undaunted, Catherine stood ready for action; — her absorbing ambition was on fire, giving acuteness and energy to her fertile brain. Concealing from every eye the anxiety that kept her for ever awake, — she seemed to look down upon all that was passing with a calmness and dignity, none but her master mind could assume; and without attempting to oppose, patiently bent to the circumstances she could not control.

It was at this trying time, that Catherine became so perfect a mistress of dissimulation, as to enable her with smiling ease to load with favours, caress and fascinate, those she meant to sacrifice as victims to her cruel policy, or hate. Her conscience thus became hardened to that fearful excess, which in aftertimes allowed her deliberately to plan a massacre amidst the soft enchantments of a bridal feast.

The Reformers were now fully convinced that

they could not peaceably obtain the toleration they justly considered by right belonged to them. But, slandered and oppressed by the Papists, and deceived by the Regent, they no longer hesitated to struggle to wrench from their enemies those indulgences their bigotry caused them so perfidiously to withhold.

Louis, Prince of Condé, was one of the first who took up arms in defence of his religion, and at the head of three thousand men advanced to the siege of Orleans. But he was anticipated in his design by d'Andelot, the intrepid brother of the Admiral Coligni, who, with a small but determined force, had already commenced an attack upon the city, although it was strongly garrisoned and defended by an able governor, Montereau. Condé, ignorant of d'Andelot's precipitation, was surprised on his hasty route to Orleans, at the sound of cannon roaring in the distance. He halted for a moment to listen, — then spurring his horse, he galloped up an eminence near, and looking an-

xiously forward, clearly beheld the smoke rising thickly above the blue horizon by Orleans. Immediately guessing who had dared to be so bold, he waved his hand for his troops to follow, nor halted until he reached the gates of Orleans. The moment was critical; for suddenly oppressed by the numbers which poured upon him from the city, d'Andelot, overcome with fatigue, and covered with blood and dust, hopeless of success, was on the point of sounding a retreat. But the timely arrival of the Prince soon changed the fortunes of the day, and before night-fall, the Huguenots were masters of one of the most valuable cities in France. The boldness and success of this enterprise was the signal for general revolt. The excited Huguenots flocked from all parts of the kingdom to the standard of the Prince of Condé, who with unanimous consent was proclaimed chief of the party. He proved himself worthy of the election. Devoting his whole heart and soul to the cause, he left no means unemployed to augment

his forces, and bring those already under his command into proper military and civil subordination.

The cities of Blois, Rouen, Tours, and Lyons successively fell into the hands of the Reformers; and Catherine, equally alarmed at the panic which enfeebled the Catholics, proposed to Condé a suspension of hostilities whilst each party should dispassionately endeavour to effect an accommodation satisfactory to all. The infatuated Huguenots fatally consented to a short truce, at a time when every hour was adding to their strength, and taking from their enemies; — and, moreover, agreed to accept the Regent as a mediator. They immediately drew up a paper stipulating the terms on which they would lay down their arms; and the Admiral Coligni was appointed to present it to Catherine for the deliberation of the Catholics. She received it with courtesy, and reading it with attention in Coligni's presence, observed to him, — "If my son's Catholic subjects were as patient and mo-

derate as you Calvinists, France might reasonably hope to enjoy from this time the blessing of peace."

The proposed conditions were sent to Montmorenci, and with them Catherine sent her ambiguous instructions. Weeks passed on;—the specified period of the truce was drawing to a close; still the Guises and Montmorenci pretended to be considering the articles of peace: and Catherine, confident of her power, made repeated attempts to draw Condé from the Huguenots' cause. Her address and insinuations were not entirely unsuccessful; and but for Coligni's penetration, Condé would again have become a dupe to the Regent's duplicity. The truce expired, and the Royalists were *then* prepared to oppose the fury of the deceived Huguenots, who instantly renewed with the most vigorous rage the war. In a short time Blois, Tours, and Rouen were retaken by the Catholics, who were commanded by the Duke of Guise; and, at the time when Father Anthony obtained from Ca-

therine a commission for Raymond de Moreau, the two armies, awaiting which should commence the attack, lay within sight of each other on the plains of Dreux.

CHAPTER XII

The anxiety which swelled Raymond's heart the night before he was to leave Paris, to join the royal army in Normandy, repressed much of the ardor of his nature, and made him regard with indifference the possession of a rank in the army, which, when apparently unattainable, had been the constant and most ambitious wish of his heart to possess. There was an active struggle in his mind, to keep hope alive, and his spirit from a weakening depression. To remain neutral in these wars was not possible; and Raymond, at that period, although he felt a sickening reluctance at opposing the Huguenots, would have recoiled with horror at the idea of holding a sword against the papal church, and at the same time against all that early

impressions and associations had rendered sacred and lovely. The mystery that seemed to hang over his birth, was a cause of serious uneasiness and discontent to Raymond, and added greatly to the mental troubles which oppressed the open and generous impulses of his mind. He had been told that his origin was honourable and noble, — that his father was brave, and good. Where then has his nobleness vanished? — Raymond often asked, and why is the remembrance of his virtue stifled? These questions were never answered; and Raymond (as he stood by the open casement of his room, in the dead of night, watching for the first breathing of the dawn, before he went to keep an appointment with Father Anthony previous to his departure,) vowed that he would be satisfied before he launched into the world. — His impatient eye no sooner beheld the morning star tremble in the east, than he hastened to the oratory. Father Anthony was already there, devoutly at his matins. He lay prostrate before a crucifix, on which fell the first purple

rays of the advancing day, imparting for a moment a fainting life to the pale image of an expiring Saviour. — Raymond crossed his hands upon his breast, and stood abashed and humbled, at the recollection of the sinful and turbulent thoughts which so lately harassed his mind; and, for a moment, felt the powerful truth, that in religion only was to be found the root of happiness; the cordial of that peace which noise could not disturb. When father Anthony rose from his knees, Raymond approached him, and humbly bending, implored his blessing,—adding,—"It may be the last I shall be permitted to ask of you."

"I trust not," replied Father Anthony; "but have you besought a divine blessing before you plunge into the busy scenes of life?"

Raymond bent his head, but made no audible reply.

"You have done well," continued the priest; "and as our conference must of necessity be short, I desire your steady attention to my parting advice,—your destiny calls you early into

the world, before your heart knows its own deceitfulness and guile, or your mind its strength and weakness; therefore, Raymond, as you value an eternal happiness, daily pray that true wisdom may govern your thoughts, and the spirit of truth your words and actions. In your converse with men, learn a wise silence; be absolutely open and unrestrained only before your God. Set your ambition high; not solely upon worldly distinctions, but to the most perfect conduct and the highest perfection of goodness man can attain."

"Alas! father, how can I, who am so full of sin, do this? Do not tell me to raise my hopes to presumption. Do not bid me strive for that which will, in the failure, bring me only disappointment."

"Raymond — man may rise above an angel."

"Ah!" exclaimed Raymond, starting back and regarding the priest with terror, "it is too bold a thought, and may be fraught with danger."

"My son, do angels suffer? Man, amidst anguish, in his last dread pangs, can love his God. Nay more, the holy Paul, and Peter, rejoiced to suffer for their Saviour. The good, with faith and patience, bear their load of sorrows; the saints, with joy. Man, endowed with the Spirit, truly shines the image of his God!"

Raymond was deeply struck, and paused for several moments before he replied:—"Is it not better for the Christian to endeavour to find out the sins of his corrupted nature, and whilst deploring their enormity, throw himself upon the saving mercy of his Saviour, rather than idly to contemplate that perfection which would be his, were he sinless?"

The priest slightly coloured; and coldly bending his head in answer to Raymond's question, folded his arms upon his breast, and fixing his eyes with a troubled expression upon the crucifix, remained silent. Raymond felt embarrassed, and in a low-toned voice continued,—"I believe that he, who amidst the busiest

scenes of life, can steadily look upon the realities of eternity, has, at all times, all things. No depressing fears can long assail him, and evils cannot dwell in a prayerful spirit."

"You believe the truth; but can you practise it?"

"Alas! no."

"What then will you do?"

"Take heaven for my guide, and the most noble upon earth for my example."

"And who are the noble upon earth?"

"The great and the good."

"Aye, but have ye learned to discriminate? Can you behold, undazzled, the fleeting light of a glaring meteor, and then gaze with deeper pleasure at the constant stars?"

"I know not, — time will prove me."

"To be true to yourself and others, young man, reverence that only as truly great which God esteems. In the camp, you will hear courage highly lauded; but let it be your aim to attain that noble confidence which will give you strength to brave every hardship, and every

terror of death, rather than transgress one tittle of the Creator's laws."

Raymond hastily replied, "You speak of a courage which can belong only to a saint or martyr."

"Not only to them; you, as a soldier fighting for the holy mother church, may possess it, and through it, become a saint."

Raymond shook his head, and his lip curled with incredulity. Father Anthony looked sternly at him, and Raymond, half turning away, exclaimed, — "All men are God's creatures; it is false to say, that rewards are due to him who slays his fellow."

"The Huguenots are the devil's creatures. Heretic!—presumptuous boy, go. I have borne with you too long."

"O! father, do not send me from you in anger, for I am most miserable. You know not the pangs that rend my breast—the strife that rages between my conscience and my heart."

"Why not, then, at once, confess your sorrows and errors, and seek, in the indulgent

bosom of the church, the peace you have lost."

Raymond hastily replied,—"No, I cannot confess to the Papal Church. I have no confidence in her mercy, or faith in her promises."

"Ah! is it so? Then you have made a fearful step down the steep and slippery path of error; nor will you pause till, with horror, you find yourself at the bottom of the gulf to which it leads. Go in peace; I will not denounce you, but pray that your darkened mind may be enlightened before it is too late. Farewell—the day is advancing, you must be gone."

"Raymond bent his knee to receive a parting benediction, but did not attempt to rise when Father Anthony had finished his prayer. He remained silent for several minutes, and at length, with hesitating speech, asked, why he did not bear his father's name. Father Anthony coloured, and exclaimed,—"And why do you put such questions to me?"

"Because I am sure that you can answer them."

"I could, but honour and probity forbid it."

"Farewell, then," cried Raymond, springing from the floor; "if you will not satisfy my just curiosity, Fulda shall."

"Fulda! did you say? Stay, my son — do not ask aught of her."

"Nay," interrupted Raymond, "I feel my father's spirit in me; it will not let me rest until I know his noble name, and avenge his wrongs."

CHAPTER XIII.

The silence of night still reigned in the streets of Paris, which were involved in the gloomy mist of the the early morning, as Raymond hurried on, insensible to outward impressions, to the Rue St. Honore, where he expected to meet Fulda in the porch of the church of St. Roche. The strange and mysterious character of the being from whom he expected to hear the earliest events of his own life, had often employed his thoughts, until imagination was weary of conjecturing. The history of Fulda's past life was known to no one. Her resources, and her country, were alike unknown; for she spoke with equal facility the chief languages of Europe, whilst her expressions and manners were peculiarly her own, untinctured with any nationa-

lity. She professed to be skilled in astrology, and was consequently regarded by all ranks (in the superstitious age in which she lived) with fear and reverence. She had no fixed abiding place, but for ever roamed without any apparent motive from city to city. Sometimes she was to be seen in the camp, — then in a palace, — now consulted by nobles — now sleeping on the heath, or in the vintner's hut.

Her power over the mind of the young King was generally known; as, during his infancy she had stayed at the Louvre and nursed him through a dangerous illness; and Charles always thought that her tenderness and skill had chiefly contributed to save his life. Yet she rejected all the favours Catherine or the King would have heaped upon her, preferring to be a houseless wanderer to an inhabitant of a court. The Regent, who placed implicit confidence in the predictions of astrologers, had often lately tried the most flattering persuasions to attach her to the court; but Fulda obstinately refused to relinquish her independence, and rarely ap-

peared within the precincts of royalty. Her general demeanour was stern and melancholy. She carefully shunned the aged and experienced of mankind, but often showed tenderness, and even affection, when roused to action, to the young and helpless. Edessa and Raymond she had known from their infancy, and had always seemed to watch over the latter with a thoughtful interest, which frequently had caused serious uneasiness in the minds of Louvois and Father Anthony.

Raymond himself had long suspected that she knew the secret of his birth. And the evening of the day that he had received orders to join as speedily as possible the royal army, he heard also with considerable emotion that Fulda was lingering near the church of St. Roche. He lost no time in sending to her, to signify his earnest desire for a conference. She hesitated for some days, and then appointed to meet him in the porch of St. Roche, before the dawn of the morning of his departure. Raymond, as he approached the church with a beating heart,

saw the commanding form of Fulda, resting on her staff, within the shade of the doorway. She did not move as he drew near, but, looking sternly at him, angrily exclaimed, "I have been here for the last hour—where have you stayed?"

"Good Fulda, Father Anthony detained me, and ——"

"Fool! why were you detained? Had you not agreed to meet me here before the dawn? Know, laggard, that Princes nor Kings have dared to trifle with me! What have you to say? Be brief."

"Father Anthony has given me good counsel, but I need something more ere I launch into the world."

"And what are your wants to me? Why am I to be troubled with your petty cares and wishes?"

"Because, if you will, you can remove many of my anxieties, or at least take from my mind the harassing trouble of ever waking doubts."

"Be quick, boy; the world will be alive soon; you desire to know the name of your father's house."

"Aye, good Fulda, will you befriend me?"

"Why else should I have tarried for you here?"

"O heaven bless you!" exclaimed Raymond, "my gratitude shall be ever yours."

"Peace," cried Fulda, in a scornful voice. "I laugh at the gratitude of youth; it is like the bright blossom on the earliest trees of spring, blasted by the first cold wind that blows; it promises much, but produces nothing. All I require of you is, to swear upon this sacred volume, not to reveal, by word, or look, or deed, your knowledge of the secret I may tell, until I grant permission."

"Shall I swear this? No, by my faith. What then will my knowledge of the mystery avail me?"

"Much — you blind, impatient boy; it will teach you who are your enemies, and give you boldness and confidence."

"Aye, and moreover make me your slave.— I will not swear."

"Then go your way — wanting prudence, you are a fool — begone!"

"Nay, Fulda, but you *shall* tell me. I swear I will not move until I am satisfied. Make your conditions less hard, and I will obey them."

"No. — I have named the conditions; you may accept or reject them, I care not."

Raymond started with anger and impatience. He violently struck his breast, saying,—"Why do you thus torture me? Why wish to fetter my actions, by imposing a slavish oath?"

"Because I value my own judgment above yours. I can stay no longer — if you will not swear — farewell."

Raymond seized her by the arm, and taking the Bible she offered to him, pronounced the emphatic and extraordinary oath she dictated. Fulda instantly drew from her bosom a small leathern case, and carefully unlocking it, took therefrom a scroll, on which was traced a few sentences, evidently by a faint and trembling hand. Raymond turned pale as his eye ran rapidly over the writing, and leaning against the wall for support, gasped, "Is it to me she speaks? — Was she my mother?"

Fulda made no reply, but remained sitting upon the stone bench within the porch, calmly telling her beads, regardless of the strong emotions which agitated his whole frame,—the paper dropped from his hand, and falling at Fulda's feet, she stooped and took it up, whilst Raymond, burying his face in his hands, stood absorbed in thoughts, which seemed to have awakened all the feelings of his nature. He was however suddenly aroused by Fulda, who laying her hand heavily upon his shoulder, whispered, "Now go,—be prudent, and be vigilant,—guard your oath,—but mark *them*." Her words awakened a passion which had lain dormant, and unknown, within the deepest recesses of his heart, till, now it burst forth with the energy of new and vigorous life. The noble, the forgiving, the benevolent Raymond de Moreau, laughed aloud with the frenzy of *hate*. Starting forward, he brandished his sword over his head, whilst the forbidden fire of revenge flashed from his eyes, and, at that fatal moment, taking deep root in his soul, mingled

with, and defiled his virtues. All who knew Raymond believed him to be wise; he had been in himself deceived; ignorant, or careless of that one dark passion which lay neglected, sleeping in his heart, till it arose to blight his budding fame, poison his peace, hide all his virtues, and efface the sweet remembrance of other passions quite subdued.

Fulda stood watching him as he strode away; his excited and various feelings pervaded his air, as with a haughty and daring step he approached the spot where his attendant waited, and without a moment's further delay, sprung upon his charger, and full of hope, young, ambitious, daring and vigorous, he pursued his way to the royal camp. Alas! Raymond's hopes were mainly for this world, and he lived to see them blasted.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was towards the close of the second day after his departure from Paris, that Raymond arrived at the royal camp, which still remained inactive in the plains of Dreux. The blue banner of France, as it waved in the cool evening breeze, guided him to the tent of the General, the intrepid and ambitious Francis, Duke of Guise. Raymond found him alone, seated by a table, on which lay papers, and a map of the surrounding country. He looked pale and languid; but the usual serenity of his strong and thoughtful mind shone in his countenance, and imparted a mild dignity to his demeanour, which never failed to impress with respectful admiration all who approached him. Immediately recognizing in Raymond,

the favourite page of his niece, Mary of Scotland, he received him with so much courtesy, that Raymond was encouraged to express a hope, that the duke was not, as he appeared to be, suffering from bodily indisposition.

"I thank you, my young friend," replied Guise; "I feel an oppression here, which I trust will soon pass;" laying his hand upon his breast as he spoke; "but," he exclaimed, "I do not generally allow that I am ill; and take some pains to conceal it from my son, Henry, who is ambitious enough to wish to conquer yon Huguenot army alone, whilst I remain quiet;—but what news from Paris?"

"It is only occupied with distant things," replied Raymond, "there is much talk of the expected engagement here; and great indignation expressed at the rebellion of the Scottish people against the authority of their Queen."

"Ah, poor Mary!" exclaimed the Duke, "is it whispered that Catherine will do aught to help her?"

"No one knows; but the general opinion is,

that the Regent is no friend to the Queen of Scotland."

The Duke significantly shook his head, saying, "When we have subdued these fanatic opposers of our holy church, Mary Stuart shall not want a power strong enough to enable her to rule her wild people, and contemn Elizabeth of England's base envy and cunning wiles."

"And I will be amongst the first to cross the sea in her cause," exclaimed Raymond.

The Duke of Guise looked with pleasure on his enthusiastic countenance, and with ardour replied, "Aye, all the choice spirits and the flower of French chivalry will espouse her wrongs; but I can only give her good counsel, till these enemies of the saints be exterminated from France."

Henry of Lorraine, the eldest son of the duke, had entered the tent whilst his father was speaking, and as he paused, insolently exclaimed—

"Let us only take that black heretic Co-

ligni, and sacrifice him to the devil, and all will be well."

The coarse boldness of this speech filled Raymond with disgust, and deeply insulted the secret friendship his heart had involuntarily formed for the Huguenot commander; — trembling with anger, he stept aside, whilst the Duke of Guise, sternly regarding his son, observed, "It is beneath the dignity of a man to malign even his foes."

"Aye; but Coligni is an enemy to his country and his God."

"Henry,—he is a brave, and but for his heresy, a great and a good man."

"But for his heresy!—is not heresy a damning sin then?—as I have been taught, heavy enough, and wide enough to weigh down and cover his virtues, though they be broad as the sea, and like its sands for multitude."

"Young man, ask your uncle, the Cardinal, to reply to your question; but learn of your father, that a brave soldier finds the courage of his heroic foe thrill him with those sympa-

thetic feelings, which link in generous brotherhood the brave and good in every clime. Do not despise a man *I* could revere. The Admiral Coligni, as my countryman, I love, and honour as a tried and able veteran; but I fight against him, because he contemns the holy church I reverence."

The young Lorraine made no reply, and sullenly turning from the duke, surveyed Raymond with a contemptuous and haughty glance, whilst his proud eye asked, "Who are you?" Raymond replied by a glance as bold and haughty; and bowing to the duke, respectfully asked permission to retire to his quarters. This request was immediately granted, and Raymond, depressed and spiritless by fatigue, felt miserably alone, surrounded by men who regarded him with total indifference, and with whom he was a comrade, more through necessity than choice. He lay sleepless, until the night was far advanced, giving full play to unusually desponding reflections, and regarding as insurmountable the evils which, from Fulda's

communication, he clearly saw surrounded his future path in life. He would not allow visions of coming happiness, with thoughts of Edessa, to hover like a halo around him to enlighten his gloom; but scared such thoughts as weakening and false; hopelessly meditating on the perfidy of man, and the particular baseness of which he had long been, and still was the victim. But it was madness to him, to feel that he must, knowingly, continue depressed and wronged: that he had bound himself to remain inactive and nerveless in his own cause, until Fulda should emancipate him from the solemn oath she had exacted to keep him still in bondage, to what appeared to him, a shameful fear of the wicked. At length, exhausted both in mind and body, he fell into a sound and refreshing sleep; and forgot his wearing troubles, and fleeting hopes, until awoke with the dawn, by the shrill and stirring sound of the trumpet calling to muster. Raymond's elastic spirit bounded at the reanimating summons, and he was amongst the first who gal-

loped along the plain, to the spot appointed for the review. As he passed rapidly on at the head of the company assigned to him, he recognized in the commanding form, and graceful carriage of one of the marechals of his regiment, Victor d'Espernon.

Whilst the troops were forming, before the arrival of the commander, Victor, as he rode along to observe his men, bowed to Raymond with an embarrassed, yet courtly air; but Raymond, turning pale, darted at him a look so full of rage and defiance, that d'Espernon in astonishment checked his horse for a moment, and regarded him with a look of anxious inquiry; but the approach of the active and brilliant Henry of Lorraine changed the scene, who, too impatient to wait for the tardy arrival of the Duke of Guise, and the constable Montmorenci, came alone, bounding towards the assembled troops, his arms clanging, and his white plumes waving in the clear blue morning air. He abruptly stopped within a few yards of the troops, and for several minutes regarded them

with a severe and thoughtful countenance; then suddenly turning in the direction of the Huguenots' camp, as the white banners, bright with the first beams of the rising sun, caught his sight, — transported with military rage, and unable to suppress his glowing passions, he cried aloud,—"There lie the enemies of our holy immaculate church. O soldiers! fight to avenge her slandered fame." — His other words were lost, as he wheeled his charger round, and galloped across the dusty plain, waving, as if triumphant, his glittering sword, as the loud shouts of admiration and vengeance from the assembled army pursued him to his tent.

CHAPTER XV.

It was the eve of the sanguinary battle of Dreux: the royal battalions were wrapped in sleep, to renew their strength to give death, and struggle for life, in the direful conflict anticipated with the dawn. Raymond's feverish mind could not long allow him to repose; and about midnight he arose, and hastily dressing, wrapped his cloak about him, and strolled a few paces beyond the tents. The night was dark and cold, and black heavy masses of clouds hung over the horizon in gloomy stillness; whilst here and there, far above the dense and slowly moving canopy, shone distant stars; they seemed to Raymond to shine the emblems of that immortal hope which dwells above all evil, guiding the faithful through the wildest

storms of life,—noting the brightness of heaven, and its imperishable, glorious peace. Raymond felt eminently dejected; but his lately excited thirst for revenge had subsided, and given place to a calmness which greatly softened the bitterness of his feelings. Yet in his hours of solitude, of woe, or of excitement, thoughts of his wrongs, and of his oppressors for ever intruded, with a strength that threatened to overcome his virtue. It was the grand temptation of his soul to sin.

Of Oswald d'Ostun, he could not think too basely; but of Victor's real character he was totally ignorant, and in believing him to be as full of guile and wickedness as his father, he did him great injustice, and cruelly deceived himself; for, in after-life, a true knowledge of Victor's mind would have saved Raymond much of sorrow, which was mainly caused by his obstinate and blind prejudice. But now, impressed by the awfulness and repose of the scene before him, he felt ashamed of the revenge he had planned during the fever of passion; and fer-

vently resolved to obey the divine injunction, and teach his soul to forgive his enemies; and henceforth endeavour to attain that holy peace which no worldly wrongs could have the power to disturb. Alas! how little did he know himself! how little of the strength of sin—of the weakness of unaided mortal virtue! Calm, thoughtful, and melancholy, was it possible that ere the darkness of this night should pass away, his hands would be red with the blood of violence? and he, with agony, should be lamenting his passion's crime! Full of religious fervor, he re-entered the tent, and knelt before a crucifix, on which the watch-fire threw its deep red light.

As he prayed, the sound of sacred music burst upon his ear; excited by his highly-wrought feelings, he believed them to be angelic strains, and long listened with breathless and enthusiastic emotion; but he soon recognised the solemn night hymn which the clear air bore from the Huguenot army, to their wakeful foes. Raymond thought of Coligni, and smote his

breast. The sacred sound oppressed him with its beauty, and brought an anguish like that awakened by the loving pardon of a dying injured friend. A heavy sigh burst from his throbbing bosom, and he stretched forth his arms to heaven. O, who can tell the weariness and sorrow of his troubled thoughts, as he lay upon his pallet, listening to the plaintive numbers of the distant hymn, and contemplating the shadowy crucifix which rose before him? Tears fell fast from his eyes, and his parched lips trembled, whilst religious doubts distracted his soul. He knew where his sole reliance for help should be placed; but he could not then murmur a prayer,—he felt that before the close of the coming day he might be numbered with the dead; but would death bring to him peace? —a freedom from all woe?—he asked the questions; but his darkened soul could not reply.

As he lay meditating, a shadow suddenly, for a moment, fell upon the crucifix: it roused his attention, and slightly turning his head, he distinctly saw the dark outline of a tall figure

retreat into the farthest extremity of the tent. The most dreadful suspicions were instantly awakened in Raymond's mind : that it was one of D'Ostun's emissaries, sent to murder him, at a time when the confusion, amidst the preparations for immediate battle would prevent discovery or inquiry, he did not doubt; yet retaining his presence of mind, he remained motionless, with his eyes half closed, watching the mysterious figure. In a few moments the assassin (believing his intended victim to be asleep), stole, with a noiseless step behind the crucifix, and immediately opposite to Raymond; then bending on one knee, he drew himself by degrees close to the couch, and drawing a dagger from his belt, and throwing back his arm, prepared to take the fatal aim; — still Raymond lay breathless and immovable; the superstition of his childhood crept over his soul and enchained him; he fancied he beheld a demon hovering near to punish and destroy him; he could not move, nor cry for help. Already the gleam of triumph glared in the assassin's eyes;

another moment, and the dagger had found a rest. Raymond leaped from the couch, and like lightning sprung upon his astonished foe, and wresting the weapon from his grasp, dragged him beyond the tent. For several minutes they struggled in dreadful silence; neither had breath to speak, till the murderer, bursting from Raymond's powerful hold, cried with a convulsed laugh, "We shall meet again." Raymond sprung from the ground, and without a moment's hesitation, flung the dagger at the assassin as he fled.

The darkness of the night prevented him from seeing if the weapon had struck, but a low cry of vengeance, which met his ear as he stood breathless from the exertion, made him hope that it had reached its owner. Still trembling with passion, (as he turned to re-enter his tent, muttering between his closed teeth, "Malignant traitors!") he did not perceive the presence of two persons wrapt in dark cloaks, who intercepted his way, until one angrily exclaimed, "What! tilting within the very boundaries of the camp!"

Raymond stept back, and baring his head, as he recognised in the speaker the Duke of Guise, replied,—"My lord, I have been roused to defend myself from the attack of an assassin."

"Ah! who?—a soldier?"

"Yes, my lord, one of the Marquis d'Ostun's men."

"You mistake," said the Mareshal de Foix, the Duke's companion, "the men of the Marquis D'Ostun's battalion are all safe in their quarters."

"I know the man," cried Raymond, impatiently: "I saw him this morning in D'Ostun's tent; what I have said is true."

"And I, Sir, am an officer under the Lord D'Ostun's command, and deny that one of his men is absent."

"Save Gilbert de Commines," exclaimed Raymond.

"It is false," cried De Foix.

Raymond drew back, and laid his hand upon his sword — the Duke of Guise stept between them, saying hastily, with an expression of an-

ger,—" Gentlemen, no more of this. No threatenings, Sir, — take your hand from your sword hilt,—De Moreau,—De Foix, come on, we will settle this argued point to-morrow."

" We will settle it to-night, by your grace's leave," cried Raymond. " I would not die on yon plain to-morrow, before my insulted honour be satisfied."

" I do not fear you," tauntingly cried De Foix, —" and again firmly aver that every man of D'Ostun's corps is safe within his quarters."

" Do not provoke him past enduring," said Guise, pulling De Foix by the cloak,—" he may be right."

" I will swear to your grace," cried Raymond, " that not many minutes before you appeared, Gilbert de Commines prepared to stab me as I lay on yon couch."

" It is a lie ! —a cursed lie !" cried De Foix. " I saw, as we passed, the very man asleep, by D'Ostun's tent.—Again I say you lie !"

Choaked with rage, Raymond did not attempt to reply in words, but acting with the instinct

of passion roused to madness — he rushed forward, and with one deadly blow revenged the insult. De Foix uttered a low cry — reeled a few paces — and fell dead at Guise's feet. Shocked and astounded, the Duke recoiled, and in silent horror clasped his hands, his whole frame trembling with strong emotion, as he bent over the still quivering body of his once warm friend. Francis of Guise had seen many die; before the close of the approaching day, he expected to behold the peaceful plain before him strewed with the dead; but that he could bear, and be scarcely moved; for amid the din, the harsh roar of war, immortal souls rush from their ghastly tenements without exciting, in the hurried spectator's soul, aught like the awful emotion— the burst of sorrow, or of horror— as when he stands by and marks the tortured body of one dying mortal. Laying his hands upon the yet warm, but for ever silent, breast of the once impetuous and daring Du Foix, Guise murmured in a scarcely audible tone,— "Farewell, my friend, did not stern justice for-

bid it, I would avenge thee!" He paused for a moment, and then rising, gravely bent his head to Raymond, who, still grasping his sword, stood close by, and slowly and faintly turned away. Whilst the unhappy Raymond, overwhelmed with self-reproach, hurried back to his tent, and flinging himself upon the ground, cried,—"O, cruel haste! Why did I not pause to deliberate. Had I reflected, my reason had spared his life,—yet satisfied my honour."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE faint beams of the sun broke through the wintry clouds, and threw its yellow and sickly light over the enraged combatants; the air resounded with the roar of cannon, the blasts of trumpets, the shrill cries of the wounded warhorse, and the groans and shouts of men. The Duke of Guise was early carried from the field, and lay fainting in his tent; and soon after the commencement of the battle, the venerable Constable Montmorenci (upon whom the command of the Royalists had devolved), was severely wounded by a pistol ball in the face, and his horse stumbling, he was taken prisoner by Robert Stewart, and conveyed bleeding and senseless to the Huguenots camp. The Royalists were seized with a panic when they beheld him

borne by his enemies from the field, and would have fled in shameful dismay, but for the bold and vigorous conduct of the young Henry of Lorraine, who, on the instant, assuming the command, resisted with determined energy the terrific impetuosity of Condé's charge. Raymond's troop was among the first that was shattered and dispersed, and finding it impossible to re-assemble it, he attached himself to Lorraine, and soon won the fiery commander's confidence and regard, by the acts of valour he performed in his sight. As he fled to carry a despatch to Henry d'Amville, for a re-inforcement, he was stopped by the approach of a warrior, mounted upon a coal-black charger, and followed by a band of veterans.

This warrior's commanding figure was encased in flexible armour of polished steel; an ebon plume nodded in his helmet, and a banner waved behind him, bearing the device of a tree strongly agitated by a tempest, with the motto, "Persecuting winds assail, but shall not uproot me." As they came thundering on, Raymond

saw that it was the terrible Huguenot knight, and his black band who approached Fear thrilled him with heretofore unknown sensations, and trembling, he half fled; but gaining a moment's reflection, his boldness revived, and turning, he prepared to meet the advancing foe. But the knight scarce deigned to glance at him, and passed on in the direction of Condé's battalions. Stung to madness by the contempt, Raymond wheeled round his horse, and following him, cried out in a loud voice,—"Turn, proud warrior,—I defy you."

The Black Knight heard, and accepted the defiance, but like the lordly lion of the desert, warred without reply. Whilst they fought, by some accident, Raymond's visor became unclasped, and as he bent to avoid his opponent's lance, it fell off. The knight's couched spear dropt from his hand, and recoiling, he gazed for a moment on Raymond's flushed and animated countenance, and then, with the rapidity of the wind, he fled into the thickest of the fight. Thither the astonished Raymond was about to

follow, wondering at his emotion and silence, when he was stopt by a trumpet from Lorraine, commanding him to head the shattered troops of Gabriel de Montmorenci, (who had been slain by the Admiral Coligni,) and immediately repair to guard the arsenal, which was threatened by a body of Switzers, headed by D'Andelot. With reluctance, Raymond obeyed; but found on his arrival at the spot, that D'Andelot's attention was diverted from the arsenal, yet from the vicinity of the enemies' troops, he dared not leave the post undefended; and with gnawing impatience, stood on guard on the brow of a slight acclivity, watching the scene below.

The deep shades of evening were gathering, but still the battle raged. The air was full of fire darting its lurid flames upwards, or running like lightning along the earth. Wherever the Black Knight fought, the conflict was furious and dreadful. All fell or fled before his unextinguishable prowess. Consternation filled the boldest. Mounted on a foaming charger, which, with half-reasoning courage firmly stood

or with the fleetness of the wind overturned all that opposed him, the knight seemed to Raymond more than man. His eye could not penetrate the centre of the battle, it was obscured by clouds of smoke and dust; but all around was so distinct and terrible, that he sickened at the sight. Horsemen were galloping across the plain in every direction, raising clouds of dust as they flew to or from either camp, imploring succours, or bringing up supplies. Dark forms in single combat, or in small companies, were seen skirmishing upon the horizon, whilst close to him continually crept the wounded, covered with dust and gore; their clothes rent — their faces red with suffering — eyebrows, severe, swelled, and violently contracted with suppressed rage and pain.

Victory at length appeared certain to the Royalists, and Lorraine, stiff and completely wearied with his scarcely equalled exertions, consented to retire (to snatch a brief repose) to his tent. As he passed by the arsenal, he sent a messenger to Raymond, directing him to lead his troops to

the assistance of the Marechal de St. André. He obeyed with alacrity, and arrived at that part of the field where the battle was still obstinately maintained by the Huguenots, at the moment André received his death-wound from a German carabine, and fell senseless beneath his charger. With a loud cry, Raymond rushed forward, and, after a desperate struggle, succeeded in rescuing from the enemy the disfigured corpse of the once gallant commander.

Cut off from his men, by a troop of Germans, who forced their way through the line, Raymond found himself almost unsupported, with enemies on every side; his spear was shivered with a blow from a musket, and a German officer was in the act of levelling his carabine at him, when his arm was arrested by the Black Knight, who suddenly appeared, accompanied by his band. Speaking a few hasty words to the Germans, they instantly retreated, and Raymond found himself at liberty. He remained lost in astonishment, watching the knight as he flew back to the main body, for several mo-

ments; and then, reuniting his men, he joined his force to the troops commanded by the Count de Rochefort. They resolutely opposed the Admiral Coligni, and abody of English volunteers, bearing high their free motto, "Let valour decide." Coligni and Raymond met — they knew each other — and in an instant recoiled and turned away. Condé too was close. Raymond heard his full voice animating his soldiers to perform prodigies of valour; and fearing to encounter him, he wheeled round, and not far from him observed the Black Knight engaged in single combat with the Chevalier d'Ambillé, and close behind the knight was Gaspar de Commines, preparing to stab him in the back. Raymond darted forward, and with one blow, extended the villain senseless on the ground. The knight saw the deed, and having disarmed D'Ambillé, looking at Gaspar's grim, harsh features, with inconceivable horror, almost fell from his horse. From that terrific moment, De Moreau and the unknown knight felt united by the strongest ties of brotherhood, they hastily ex-

changed swords, swearing an eternal friendship, and hurried back to their respective posts.

A body of five thousand Huguenots, commanded by Coligni, still firmly maintained their ground. The Count de Rochefort was laid dead upon the field by the dauntless Admiral, and Raymond, seeing that the fortunes of the day were wavering, sent an express to Lorraine.

Flushed with his imagined victory, the young commander lay exulting in thought upon a couch, in his tent at Blainville. He had despatched a messenger to inform his father, the Duke of Guise, of the success of his arms, and had but just received the sick general's warm congratulations, when the trumpet arrived with the ill-fated news of the Huguenots' determined resistance, and the fall of St. André and De Rochefort. His countenance blanched with rage, and his eyes flashing fire — Lorraine sprung upon his horse, and followed by the corps de reserve, galloped impetuously o the charge, crying, "God and our faith — death to the rebellious heretics!" He was received with

unshaken constancy, but after a long and desperate struggle, his frenzied eye beheld his troops on all sides give way. Still he spurred them on with madness, — the nerve of reason was snapped, and his whole soul seemed one wild passion. In a voice shrill with agony, he cried, "What traitor dares to fly?" but it was in vain; the brave, the noble of each army were here engaged. Cool determined firmness guided the Huguenots; — the Royalists were governed by revenge — at last by despair. Numbers availed them nothing; the last charge of the Huguenots broke down their ranks, and the confusion and rout became universal. The humbled chief was not pursued. Night closed over the scene, and alike concealed the anguish of his shame, and the horrors of the blood-stained plain.

CHAPTER XVII.

The night was cold, but the deep blue firmament hung resplendent with the glittering glory of its myriad worlds;—below was the battle-field, dark and sad, strewed with the dead and dying of one nation. "They are all my countrymen!" mentally ejaculated Raymond, as in anguish he turned and looked upon the plain, in his rapid flight to Paris as the follower of the fiery Lorraine; who, the same night, in defiance of Guise's commands, and the remonstrances of the generals of the army, who had urged that to-morrow might retrieve the disgrace of to-day, resolved to be the first to inform the Regent of his defeat. He rode at a rapid pace, and in stern silence, until they reached la Prison du Militaire du l'Abbaye St. Germain. From

thence, covered with dust, and haggard with fatigue, Lorraine proceeded to the Louvre, and demanded an immediate audience of the Queen.

Catherine, astonished at the suddenness of his appearance, and the extreme wildness of his countenance, almost shuddered as he approached, and bent on one knee before her; but commanding her firmness, she coolly asked the news.

"Madame!" cried Lorraine, "your army is defeated."

"No matter," observed the Queen, "we will say our prayers for the future in French."

Lorraine started from the ground, and stood regarding the Regent with a mingled expression of horror and disgust. That she should treat with levity what had cost him so much mental suffering, and be totally indifferent to the overthrow of the Papal army, or the triumph of the Huguenots, was to his young unpractised mind a fact as unaccountable as wicked. Catherine quickly saw what was passing in his mind, and thought to remove the unfavourable impression

by feigning to believe that he had been endeavouring to deceive her, and that in reality he came to announce a victory.

"Do I look like a messenger of good?" asked Lorraine, in reply to her question.

"Where are the Duke of Guise, and Montmorenci? Tell me all at once," cried Catherine, angrily.

"The Duke de Guise, Madame, is at Dreux, too weak to move. Montmorenci is a prisoner in the heretics' camp. When he was dragged by the enemy from the field, the command of the royal forces devolved upon me, Madame. You know the end."

"Aye, you are beaten."

"I am, Madame; but by no mortal power. The troops I led did not recoil, till the far-famed heretic knight (who is in league with the devil), and his cursed band led a charge, which no mortals could withstand."

"This Black Knight, as he is named, is very terrible," muttered Catherine to herself, as she paced the room: then, as if recollecting the

presence of Lorraine, she turned to him, saying, "Do not despair; fortune has robbed you of success, but she cannot of the honour due to your courage. Farewell, Lorraine, go and take the rest you greatly need; I will see you again some hours hence."

Lorraine, touched by the Queen's gentle manner, bent on one knee, and whilst tears trembled in his eyes, pressed her hand to his lips in grateful acknowledgment of her kindness, saying, with deep feeling, "Madame, my honour, my fame, and my life, I prostrate to your will."

"Such devotion," replied Catherine, "mortals owe not to mortals. Rise, Henry, and grieve no more at a defeat, which time and your talents will revenge."

Whilst Lorraine abandoned his post, and fled to Paris; Victor d'Espernon, who had been among the last who retreated before the Hu-

guenots, assembled by torch-light the panic-stricken Royalists, and after upbraiding them for their shameful flight before an enemy far inferior in numbers, exhorted them to struggle to regain their lost honour, and be ready to obey the first blast of the trumpets sounding to arms with the approaching dawn. He was answered by shouts of renewed confidence and fidelity; and after dismissing the troops to their quarters, Victor repaired for further instructions to the Duke of Guise. The long winter night was grateful to the tired soldiers of both armies; but the Huguenots still slept in fancied security long after the camp of their vigilant and active foes was animated by determined preparations for a speedy renewal of the battle.

The Calvinists were aroused by the rough music of war, long before the laggard sun arose to reveal the horrors of the ensanguined plain. They hastened to answer the defiance so little expected, but were vigorously attacked before they could arrange the broken troops victory

had left to them. It was in vain that Coligni attempted to rally his disheartened men; Victor incessantly harassed, charged, and pursued them. The Prince of Condé was wounded in the hand, and immediately made prisoner by Henri d'Amville, the Constable Montmorenci's second and favourite son. The Black Knight flew from troop to troop, urging them on with the energy of despair; whilst repeatedly he turned to the sun, as if imploring it to sink beneath the horizon, and let night hide them from the impending ruin.

At length, the shrill and melancholy retreat was sounded, and the defeated Huguenots fled with the greatest confusion and haste to Orleans, leaving the Papists masters of the field. Victor was borne in triumph to the camp, and the exulting troops rent the air with his praises, and shouts of victory. He bore the honours heaped upon him with the moderation and calmness of a great mind; and retiring as soon as possible to the seclusion of his tent, sat musing until the night-lamp burnt dimly, and his wearied hand

refused longer to support his yet more weary aching head. Feebly rising from his seat, he laid himself down upon his couch, murmuring in low and melancholy accents, the thoughts of his troubled spirits,—"Alas! the applause of a dying multitude can bring no happiness to a soul dissatisfied with itself."

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Raymond found that Henry of Lorraine no longer required his attendance, he repaired without an instant's delay to La Maison de Renhault. He found the Marquis alone, who received him with an embarrassed air, yet parental feelings. Raymond's first eager inquiry was for Edessa.

"She is not here," replied de Breteuil, colouring deeply. "Ask no further questions, you cannot see her."

"Nay, I entreat, I implore you," cried Raymond; "say not aught so dreadful; only tell me where my beloved, my faithful Edessa breathes, and I will be satisfied."

"Raymond!" exclaimed De Louvois, with

deep emotion, "it is in vain that you love Edessa, and that she is faithful,—you never can be united."

"It is in vain, that you tell me so," cried Raymond, violently striking his breast; "hope lies here, deep in the recesses of my heart, strongly linked with deathless love. No earthly power can change the devoted faithfulness which has long united us: though oceans roll between us, we cannot be severed; though she be bound by the cruel bonds of superstition, she shall be mine,—she is mine whilst life lives."

De Louvois paced the room in great agitation. "Be patient, Raymond," he exclaimed; "holy Michael is my witness I love you as my only son. Surely ye must feel that you alone have built up the insurmountable barrier to your own happiness; be not deceived; all your nearest friends know that in heart you are a heretic."

"Am I not hot from fighting for the faith?—Why do you, should you, doubt me?"

"Alas! Raymond, your mother,—your father

were heretics, though like you they feared to own it."

Raymond started, and, but for the quick blood of exultation rushing to his heart, had fainted. He stood for many minutes trembling with joy, yet blushing with shame at his own, and his parents' cowardice in concealing their belief and joy in that Christianity which was purified by the great lights of the Reformation. His resolution was instantly made, nor did the deliberation of the night cause him to waver in his purpose; early the following day he gave in his resignation of the command in the Royal army so lately won by his valour. Lorraine testified his surprise, and at first, by the most flattering offers, endeavoured to induce him to remain in the Regent's service; but on finding, after all his entreaties, that Raymond remained firm in his determination, he turned contemptuously from him, saying, — "I might have loved you as a friend, but I now despise you as an enemy."

De Moreau made no reply, and leaving the

palace of the Guises, strolled into the gardens of the Louvre. He felt satisfied that it was no longer safe for him to remain at Paris, and half resolved to repair that very night to the Huguenot camp, and, for the future, devote his energies to that pure faith, which his soul now unhesitatingly embraced with undoubting confidence of its divine truth, since he had learnt that it had been the religion cherished by his unfortunate parents. He was just leaving the gardens to return to La Maison de Renhault to prepare for his sudden flight, when an old woman suddenly crossed his path, and threw on the ground immediately before him a sealed letter. He took it up, and seeing that it was addressed to him, with some emotion opened the scroll and read — "Let me see you this evening before the vesper bell has ceased at the monastery de St. Augustin — to gain admittance show this seal. — Edessa de Breteuil."

Without a moment's hesitation, Raymond prepared to obey the strange summons; he knew the writing to be Edessa's, therefore no doubt,

or thought of treachery entered his mind. The monastery of St. Augustin stood in a secluded situation, about a mile distant from the northern boundary of Paris. A high stone wall enclosed the building, and a considerable space around it, which was beautifully arranged, and being richly cultivated, gave the monastery a smiling appearance, although every view of the adjacent country was carefully excluded. As Raymond reached the principal gateway, the chapel bell began to summon the devout to vespers, and he, fearing it would cease to chime before he could enter, impatiently knocked, and showing the porter the impression of Edessa's seal, was instantly admitted: but no sooner did he find himself actually within the massive gates, than the suspicion of treachery fell like a thunder-bolt upon him. Whilst he stood perplexed, the recollection of having seen D'Ostun quit the Louvre, as he had entered to resign his commission, and in so doing, his claim upon Catherine or the Papists for protection, flashed upon his mind—and at once he felt

convinced, assured beyond all doubt, that the name of Edessa had been used only to ensnare him into the power of his enemies. Feigning to have entered by mistake he requested the porter to unlock the gate and set him at liberty, but he was bluntly refused, and told to walk on; and at that moment two monks appearing at the door of the lodge, one of them drawing his cowl over his face, advanced, saying,—"If you are the youth whom the lady Edessa de Breteuil expects, follow me; I will conduct you to her." Perceiving that it was then impossible to escape —indignant at his own credulity, yet concealing his suspicions, Raymond followed the monk in silence up the long and gloomy avenue to the monastery. When they reached a low door, the monk gave three rapid (and his victim thought mysterious) knocks,—the door was immediately opened by a lay-brother, who bent lowly, as if to a superior, saying,—"Enter, and peace be with you." Raymond, however, hesitated to proceed, which the monk observing, thrust him within the doorway, whispering, ---

"Hesitating fool, tread lightly, be silent, and follow me, or abide the worst."

"Tell me first, whom I follow, and where I am going?" exclaimed Raymond, standing firmly still.

"I am your friend," replied the monk; "let that now suffice, — I lead you to Edessa de Breteuil. Another question, — and I leave you to your fate.

With the vague hope of really seeing Edessa, Raymond obeyed his imperious guide, and keeping close to him, they traversed in profound silence, many intricate and narrow passages. At length, warning De Morean to ascend a few steps, the monk unlocked a heavy door, and listened for several moments with breathless attention, but not a living sound reached his ear; if any being existed near, it was wrapt in the deepest repose. Raymond partaking of the awe which an unbroken silence gives to a listening spirit, — started, when the monk laid his hand heavily upon his shoulder and whispered, "You must now proceed alone, — at the extremity of this passage you will find a door, and by

slightly pressing a spring below the latch it will open. — Edessa's apartments are immediately beyond."

"But why is this door kept locked?" asked Raymond: "is the Lady Edessa a prisoner?"

"Ask no questions, but go on, — resist at your peril," muttered the monk, between his closed teeth.

"I will not go on," cried Raymond, in a voice that echoed strongly through the vaulted passages; "you shall first give me the key to secure my return."

"Suspicious fool!" exclaimed the monk, in a low, harsh voice, whilst his eyes glaring with the strong light of passion threw off for an instant the darkness around them,—"Suspicious fool! get thee on!" and as he spoke, suddenly springing upon Raymond, he thrust him into the passage beyond, violently closing the door upon him.

Raymond fell with considerable force, and for some time lay half stunned upon the floor, bitterly reflecting on the foolish haste that had

ensnared him into the power of those, who, if they had no other reason, would deem his death, since he had proclaimed himself a Huguenot, a justifiable act. At last, tired of vexing thoughts, he arose, and slowly advanced up the passage, — at the end was the door mentioned by the monk, and following his directions, he put his finger on the spring below the latch, and immediately the door swung slowly back. Dumb with astonishment, Raymond stood in the entrance of a costly and spacious apartment: by one of the numerous lofty pointed windows, the gentle lustre of the crescent moon falling upon her calm countenance, stood Edessa de Breteuil. Long her lover remained unobserved, gazing on the touching melancholy of her tender, yet serious air; — enthusiasm and love, moderated by pure religion, beamed in her pale blue eyes, as with a sigh she turned from the window, murmuring his name. He answered, by throwing himself at her feet, and pressing her hand to his lips. For a moment, thrown off her guard, Edessa trembled, and gently endeavouring to withdraw her hand, in a hurried

voice said, — " I have been long expecting you Raymond; the time allowed to us will be short, and we dare not waste it by permitting the expression of feelings which now our reason condemns, — for my sake, for your own, command yourself, — my heart tells me it will be difficult, — but listen to me calmly."

" I will," replied Raymond, in deep emotion; " tell me any thing, but that you have ceased to love me."

" It is generally known," said Edessa, at once entering upon the subject that caused their meeting; " that you have long been a Huguenot, and it is moreover suspected, that you are in secret correspondence with their leaders. — I have been commanded to try to induce you to betray them, by naming the honours, I will not say happiness, which awaits you, if you turn traitor to your friends. I do not, Raymond, ask you to do this wicked thing; but by refusing to belie your truth, your life will be in jeopardy."

" What then, Edessa, — you prefer my integrity to my life, — and so do I."

"I know it well, — and therefore consented to this meeting, to warn you of your danger. The Regent Catherine is one of your many enemies, and they have planned your ruin. I have no certain information, and my anxiety may have magnified the danger; but I entreat you, the instant you leave this monastery, to fly from Paris."

"Edessa, we have both been deceived, and I am inevitably ensnared."

"In the name of the blessed Virgin, what do you mean?"

"Lorraine knows that I have been true," replied Raymond, with forced calmness; "he knows that I have no correspondence with the Huguenots; therefore, I could not openly be made a prisoner; but here I am, at their mercy."

"Such suspicions are unworthy a noble mind," cried Edessa, turning from him; "do you think they would dare make *me* the tool of their perfidy?"

"I cannot tell, — the wicked will do any thing, — their ways are past finding out."

"That may be, but it is not on the wicked

that I depend. The Abbot himself, and three Fathers of the holy Church, swore to me that you should on quitting the monastery, be conducted to la Maison de Renhault, safely and freely ; do you still doubt ?"

" Aye, I have small confidence in a priest's oath."

" Now Raymond, if you love me, do not treat with contempt those whom I reverence ; hide your blind heresy, at least, whilst with me."

" I will own I sicken at the bare thought of being shut up in a dungeon, year after year," replied Raymond ; " such is the horrid fate they have ordained for me, I foresee, too plainly : O the horror of a living grave !"

" Hush !" cried Edessa ; " do not fill your imagination with lies,—no treachery is intended ; I will go with you to the outer gate."

" No, no, Edessa, I love you too well."

" You have infected me with your weak fears," exclaimed Edessa ; " therefore I must be satisfied, and share the treachery, if it be. Come, do not oppose my firm resolve ; come, they will scarcely dare to wrong me."

"Nay, do not let us part yet, — stay, dearest Edessa, — we know not when we shall meet again, and my happiness is irrevocably involved in yours."

"O do not say so, — Raymond, it must not be, — we have lived for each other, but that is past: we must no more."

"Alas! and is it you, Edessa, who tell me so? O seek not to throw a veil over the sweet remembrance of past affection, and fling a curse upon the future. I cannot but love you, and would rather now die, knowing that you love me, than live to feel that you loved me no more."

Edessa breathed heavily, and struggling to master her racked affections, in a hollow voice cried, "Talk no more of love, — it is heresy, — heresy that divides us."

"I am no heretic to true religion, — though no longer a papist; and if you would renew your plighted faith to me, and promise to be mine when these unhappy wars are over, I would not seek to change your creed, — but leave that work to God."

"Say no more, Raymond: if you are indeed a Huguenot, seek happiness far from me, — there is truth only in the Romish Church; all out of her, are vile and lost."

"O! Edessa, why does not your mind rise above these weakeners of vital religion? why do you cherish its direst foes, — bigotry, enthusiasm, and superstition?"

"You may call it superstition, — call it a weakening agitation of the spirit — fanaticism, — call enthusiasm the faith, the feeling you no longer participate; yet, untainted, in the bosoms of the true, rests the holy faith. Is it bigotry which attaches me to that church, in whose pure cause so many have been martyred, for whom the saints have fought, to defend her from the persecuting wars of hate? On a rock she stands, and will ever stand in spite of her slanderous foes, and I will live and die an enemy to all who seek her downfall."

"You are in error, Edessa, it is the impurities of the apostolic church that the true people of God seek to wipe away, — it is divine charity, not human pride, which they sigh to behold

once more, a pillar in the church of Christ. The Romanists are the deformers of christianity, the provokers of bloodshed and woe in this unhappy country, and greater enemies to that God who delighteth in peace, than heathen or infidel. If prejudice had not chained your reason and clouded your faith, you would not brand the Huguenots heretics to God."

"I will argue no more upon this direful subject," replied Edessa; "you, or I, must be deep in error, — one of us must perish. I soon shall resign the world, and linger out the remainder of my life within the walls of some distant convent: this I could bear, and calmly part to meet you no more on earth,; but, O, Raymond! my heart swells with anguish at the dreadful thought, that I dare not hope to meet you in an eternal and glorious world."

She turned from her lover, and waving her hand for him not to answer her, in an agony of subdued grief fell prostrate before a crucifix, whilst Raymond, shocked at the idea of her taking the veil, and thus becoming for ever lost to him, remained motionless, stunned with

grief, gazing at her with strong yet hopeless love; until Edessa, calmed by the act of prayer, rose from her knees, and taking the lamp, pointed towards the door. Then Raymond starting forward, exclaimed, "O, Edessa, let not a convent be the grave of our earthly hopes, — in pity do not extinguish the beacon that would cheer me as I sunk or rose upon the dark billows of life."

"Peace, Raymond; it is idle longer to contend. My father has resigned me to Catherine; Catherine has promised me to Victor d'Espernon; my will would draw me to you; what then can I do, but fly to my God? She pressed her hand to her burning brow, as if to still its throbbing pulse, and in low accents continued,—"There was a time when I hoped that the cloud which overshadowed us, would disperse, shedding a sweet influencing dew upon our souls, — but it has increased in size, in blackness, and in fury; I must hide from it, for I am too weak to resist its power. Come, I will lead the way, the hour is come. We shall meet no more."

CHAPTER XIX.

Holding the lamp high above her head, Edessa cautiously proceeded down the long passages through which the monk had previously conducted her unhappy lover, in his way to her apartments. Every door was open, and not the slightest impediment to his freedom appeared to exist, a circumstance to which he was then indifferent, as with a lingering and heavy step he followed Edessa, until they came to a spot from which diverged three passages; not immediately knowing which turning to take, she paused, and at the same moment imagined that she heard some one breathing heavily close by. Placing her finger upon her lip to enjoin silence for an instant, she turned to Raymond, and then looked wildly in the direction from which she apprehended danger. — Suddenly dashing

the lamp upon the floor, and taking Raymond by the arm, she cried, — "back, — let us fly back, there is treachery!" But before they had proceeded many yards, they were powerfully arrested, and forcibly dragged, with merciless and silent determination, in opposite directions.

Scarce a moment had elapsed, and Edessa was clinging to him, — now her distant cry of despair rang through his heart: it was a sound that stirred up every passion to aid the energy of his hate; and still struggling for freedom and revenge, he was thrust into the Halle de Justice. It was a horrible hall, both to the imagination and the senses; the walls were hung all round with black, and it was lighted by a single lamp, which appeared suspended from the vaulted roof, immediately over the centre of a huge table at the upper end of the hall, round which the judges sat, wrapt in their dark cloaks, and usually concealing their faces under their cowls, whilst they heard the evidence against, and put questions to the heretics who were brought before them.

The unhappy victims of persecution were, upon recanting, enjoined a severe penance, and then acquitted; but if any were found bold enough to stand firm in the cause of a purified faith, they were condemned to be tried by the unrelenting and iniquitous assembly, termed for their cruelty, "les tribunals ardens."

As Raymond staggered into the presence of the gloomy conclave, Cardinal d'Urbano, one of the most zealous and bigoted supporters of the papal authority, who had been sent from Rome, to examine into the heresy in France, was denouncing, as eternally lost, two prisoners who were standing on a raised platform by the end of the table. They heard the horrible condemnation in silence, and both trembled as they passed Raymond, to be reconducted to the dungeon they had but recently left; — but Raymond, at that moment incapable of fear, with indignant rage mounted the platform. His fiery eye roamed from figure to figure, as in a voice shrill with hate, he cried,

"O cursed hypocrites, — where is the truth

of the oath you swore to the Lady Edessa de Breteuil?"

A murmur of horror and surprise burst from all present; whilst D'Urbano in a voice of thunder, exclaimed — "Son of perdition! is it thus you address the faithful?"

"The faithful," cried Raymond with a scornful laugh, — "perjured traitors to your faith, answer me, answer me!"

The Cardinal turned pale with suppressed passion, and sinking back into his chair, muttered, "He is mad."

"Nay, holy father," cried Oswald d'Espernon, rising and flinging back his cowl, "he is not mad: let him be led to the question, and then to death."

The prisoner started as he beheld his savage, hoary-headed persecutor; and motionless with hate, gazed at him until D'Ostun quailed beneath the fixed, wild look; and Raymond, overcome with added horror, fell stiff and senseless headlong upon the floor. There was a fearful pause, and the monks bent forward to gaze upon the

insensible and pale countenance of their victim, but soon recovering the sudden shock, they sat in merciless judgment upon him as he lay unconscious at their feet.

"He will recover in good time," said Oswald. "Basil, what passed between the young renegade and the lady Edessa?"

"Enough to condemn him in the Chambres Ardentes, or with our gracious Regent."

"It is well:—have you notes—are you ready to swear?"

"I am."

"The matin bell sounds," — exclaimed the Cardinal D'Urbano; "I will meet you, my children, in the chapel. You, Basil, have the mad apostate taken hence, and guarded: — tomorrow I will hear his accusation at the chief tribunal."

As the monks slowly withdrew, Oswald laid his hand heavily on D'Urbano's arm, saying, in a suppressed and impressive voice, — "Father, if this bold and aspiring heretic escape, we may be giving a daring enemy to the holy church."

"He cannot, he shall not escape, my son."

"He has, father, many great and powerful friends in Paris, and I fear their influence," replied Oswald; and then lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he continued, "but give him up to me, D'Urbano, and ask what you will."

"It is impossible! How shall we blind the monks of St. Augustin?"

"Leave that to me; fear nothing; my agents are sure and silent."

The Cardinal D'Urbano sat for several minutes without making any reply, thinking, or pretending to think with interest, of the probable fate of the being he was about to resign to the worst of men. — Oswald watched him with breathless anxiety. At length the Cardinal rose — and bending forward, whispered, — "Remember, it is not the price of blood."

Before the sun's first purple rays fell upon the spires of Notre Dame, Raymond de Moreau was hurried with remorseless haste from the monastery of St. Augustin to his cruel doom.

CHAPTER XX.

After the unfortunate assassination of Francis Duke of Guise at the siege of Orleans by a Huguenot, named Poltrot de Meré, (who, on his trial basely accused the Admiral Coligni of being privy to the murder,) though a peace had been agreed upon between the Romanists and Protestants in pursuance of the expiring Duke's wishes and advice, it was not possible to give to either party the confidence which alone could insure repose and prosperity to a wearied nation. Years rolled on, and the fertile vales of France but rarely echoed the blythe notes of joy. The murmuring discontent of one party, and the intrigues and duplicity of the other, gave to the simple peasantry little hope of experiencing the enjoyment they sighed for,

in gathering in the full harvests, golden summers year after year promised, but could not give to them; — for, before the autumnal sun had ripened the stores nature with a lavish hand produced, the disbanded soldiery, or lascivious priesthood, unchecked by shame, or fear, would snatch the rich gifts from their needy possessors, and then mock their helplessness and despair; — in the provinces, distrust and anarchy reigned, without the semblance of that confidence and forgiveness which kept the capital and its immediate neighbourhood, in comparative tranquillity, — and the guilty and the innocent alike, felt the cruelty of civil war, and how grievous were the burdens it imposed.

Charles, had he been permitted, would have severely punished the baseness which oppressed his subjects,—but encouraged by his mother to follow the most ignoble pursuits, and exhaust his strength and spirits in violent bodily exercises, he remained ignorant of the real misery of his people, and the true causes which nourished the constant and tiring discontent of the

Huguenots. Accustomed to hear all their complaints, termed insolent and rebellious, Charles acquired a strong aversion to the party in general, and like Catherine, encouraged a personal antipathy to the leaders, though not as she did with a total disregard for their honour and lives.

It is said, that Coligni would have gained considerable influence over the young monarch's mind, during the intercourse which necessarily took place, whilst negociating the peace, had not Catherine prevented their too frequent meetings, and by every art endeavoured to efface the good it was Coligni's aim to inculcate. Charles was however capable of receiving great and lasting impressions; and often, when he laughed at the ridicule his mother attached to the grave manners and wholesome advice of the conscientious admiral, he felt, as he observed her despise all that was good or excellent, when it did not tend to advance her own ambitious views,— that his affection and respect for her was alike gradually giving way.

Henry of Lorraine, who succeeded Francis in the Dukedom of Guise, inherited but few of his great and magnanimous qualities, burning to revenge his father's death, no protestations on the part of Coligni, nor argument drawn from the uniform integrity of his life, could, for a moment, persuade the duke to believe him innocent, — but swearing an implacable enmity to the man whom he persisted in denouncing as his father's murderer, he seemed to live only in the anticipation of slaking his fiery thirst for vengeance, — when that time should arrive he knew not, but the deadly queen, by looks and mysterious signs, noted that it drew on apace, and keeping alive his fiendish rage, made him hope with unceasing energy *for that which was to come.*

Charles, who was expecting a visit from his eldest, and favorite sister, Elizabeth queen consort of Spain, with a numerous and splendid court, repaired to meet her at Bayonne, where costly preparations were made to entertain the pride of two nations, during the three weeks the

Queen of Spain purposed staying on the frontier of France.

Amongst the train of nobles who conducted Elizabeth to Bayonne, was the stern and bigotted Duke of Alva, whom Catherine de Medicis alone came to meet, but hiding her actual feelings towards him, she appeared to be overcome with delight at seeing her daughter; and by every means sought to encourage the general intoxicating influence, which the festivities and entertainments her fertile imagination had planned, to fling around and hold as spell-bound all but her own master mind, taking care, however, to leave that free to form its deepest plans amidst the hilarity of a banquet, or the gaiety of a ball, — but the protestants, who had experienced her dissimulation, and been taught to read treachery in her smile, heard of her secret conferences with Alva, with jealous suspicion, and did not doubt but that measures, inimical to their safety, were being arranged by the superstitious Spaniard, and the heartless queen. Delegates were accordingly sent by the Hugue-

nots at Bayonne to Coligni, intreating him to try the sincerity of Catherine, by urging a strict fulfilment of the last edicts given in their favour. Coligni was unwilling to listen to their fears, and in reply, exhorted them to patience, and vigilance, declaring that, for himself, he would rather submit to any hardships and privations, than again see kindled, the torch of discord.

The Prince of Condé was greatly alarmed at the accounts from Bayonne, but chiefly from private motives, joined with Coligni in affirming that it was better to submit to injustice, than risk another civil war. Yet he foresaw that it would not be possible to preserve peace upon the present terms much longer, but forbore to take any part in the present complaint, in the hope of obtaining by his forbearance the lieutenancy of the kingdom, a post he had long desired, and which Catherine, to bind him to her interests, flattered him with the prospect of possessing: but after waiting some time for the fulfilment of his hopes, he found them again blasted by the queen mother's treachery, and

then instantly repairing to Charles, he boldly demanded protection for the Huguenots from their subtle and unrelenting enemies. Charles turned from him with an expression of disgust at the presumption, and discontent of the party, and Condé, unable to obtain redress, indignantly fled from the court, and joined with D'Andelot, in the general cry for war.

Coligni was at last compelled to yield to what was inevitable, and the standard of religious civil war was again unfurled. The Romanists were unprepared immediately to oppose them, and after the Huguenots had made an ineffectual attempt to seize the person of the king. Condé marched to Paris, and with few, but intrepid numbers endeavoured to block up the city. The venerable constable Montmorenci, urged by the murmurs of the citizens, against his better judgment, led out an army to face the enemy, who, undismayed by the enormous disproportion of the royal troops, unhesitatingly gave them battle in the plains of St. Dennis. After an obstinate fight on the side of the Hu-

guenots, the great superiority of numbers alone insured victory to the Catholics, but the victors' joy was damped by the death of Montmorenci, and they allowed the Huguenots to retreat in good order, exulting in the ample success of their arms. Rochelle soon after declared in their favour, and Condé, with a numerous army laid siege to Chartres. Whilst he lay before that city Charles tendered offers of peace. An answer to his proposals was promised in ten days, and a suspension of hostilities was in the mean time agreed upon.

Charles sincerely mourned the death of the faithful Montmorenci; but Catherine rejoiced in secret that the last remaining check to her authority was, by the hand of death, broken.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHARLES's overtures were received by the chief body of the Huguenots with scorn; and for many days caused much passionate contention among the leaders. Coligni earnestly desired peace, but his arguments were totally disregarded by spirits flushed with success, and nourishing, as a right principle, the bitterest enmity to the Papists.

It was on a gloomy and sultry evening, the last of the truce, that a third council of war was to be held in Coligni's tent, to determine a final answer to the royal propositions. None of the officers were arrived, and Coligni, calm and collected, sat alone awaiting their coming. There was at all times an unconscious dignity in his air, so totally exempt from pride and

self-importance, that it ever commanded admiration and respect : his countenance was generally shaded by melancholy, and the deep furrows in his broad and lofty brow, marked the frequency of anxious thought; but no earthly trouble could efface the natural, and beautiful expression, the emanation of a richly benevolent soul, which shone in his countenance. Every act of valour, in Coligni, was tempered by humanity, and the tenderness of his nature gave a surpassing lustre to his heroic soul. He was beloved by all who approached him; for, walking humbly with his God, he could only live the friend of man.

Lewis, Prince of Condé, was the last who entered the tent before the council proceeded to debate further on the momentous question,— "Peace or war?" In Condé, with the mien of a soldier, was blended the polished dignity of a courtier, — his countenance expressed firmness and energy, and his large blue eyes beamed with determined courage. Since the last council, he and the admiral had been estranged, in

consequence of Condé, under a passionate impulse, speaking openly in disparaging terms of Coligni's judgment in religious matters. The disagreement and argument which followed, and the subsequent coolness equally distressed their mutual friendship; but Condé could not immediately bring himself to acknowledge the injustice he felt he had been guilty of towards his able colleague. With a sullen air, he took his seat, and whilst Coligni was speaking, listened to him with an impatience, so evident, that the admiral observed it, and slightly colouring, before he resumed his seat, earnestly exclaimed,

"But why should I say more? Did I not affirm, when last we met, that we were bound by every Christian virtue to accept the offered peace? My sentiments cannot change,—can I ever choose to carry a naked and a bloody sword, rather than the olive branch of peace?"

The Marechal Guerchy immediately arose after Coligni, and turning to the Prince of Condé, said, "I believe that the Royalists only intend a suspension of arms, though they

talk of a lasting peace; yet, on mature reflection, upon what was urged by the Admiral Coligni at our last meeting, I agree with him, that we should by no means reject their flattering, though they may prove fallacious, conditions. Few are the circumstances which can justify the subject in assuming arms, in opposition to his sovereign; our professed motive for so doing, is, to obtain liberty of conscience for all who renounce the errors of the Church of Rome: whilst this freedom is withheld, we may justly struggle to possess it; but, (as it now is) when offered to us, by continuing in arms we are rebels and traitors."

Stung with disappointment, Condé started up, crying, "Aye, traitors and rebels to ourselves, and the truth! Shall we stop short, when by boldly pushing on, we may make the Papists accede to all that we require? What does the wily Catherine more, than she dare not refuse to do? I vote for war,—war till we be masters, —war, till the reformed Church be as firmly planted in France as she is in glorious England."

"That can never be," exclaimed the Marechal Biron. "No, not even should a Huguenot be seated upon the throne of France, — but I vote for war, until the Church of Antichrist be humbled, and taught to fear us too much to oppress us."

"And this is the time," cried D'Andelot: "now when they feel their weakness let us chain, if we cannot crush, the demons of bigotry; — let us hurl them from their pinnacle of pride, that we may henceforth hear the thunder of the Vatican with scorn, and defy, as empty sounds, the rattling chains of the Inquisition."

"If you think it possible to conquer the Romanists in France," replied Coligni, "you deceive yourselves. Should we attack and destroy one army, they can raise another, breathing vengeance; but for us how different! Could we lose one great battle, and not expect ruin? What folly is this boasting! Where is the strength and power to humble, and chain, and crush our mighty, many headed, monstrous foe? It is true, just now, we are treated as con-

querors, but who is not well aware amongst this assembly, that our present success, before this city of Chartres is most doubtful ?"

Condé, who had been driven from before Sens, by Henry Duke of Guise, previously to the investment of Chartres, imagining that Coligni alluded to his former failure, in expressing a doubt respecting the taking of Chartres, indignantly rose to reply, when he was interrupted by the unexpected entrance of the far-famed Hero, only known by the name of the Black Knight, who having been severely wounded at the Battle of St. Denis, had not attended the two former councils. He was, however, well acquainted with the arguments used for, and against a peace: and came decided which side to take. As he entered the tent, pale and wasted by recent suffering, the assembly unanimously rose to welcome him. The Knight either heedlessly, or intentionally bared his head (contrary to his usual custom) as he bowed in acknowledgement of the honor shown to him; and taking the seat offered, by the Prince of Condé,

expressed in his countenance some surprise at the silence which immediately followed his entrance: and throwing an enquiring look around, a vivid color rushed into his cheeks at observing that every eye was fixed upon him with curious inquiry. Coligni in particular, appeared struck with a countenance which until then, from the time of the Black Knight's joining the Huguenots, had never been exposed to view.—At length, no longer choosing to submit to the admiral's anxious and searching look, the Knight took advantage of the privilege which had heretofore been granted to him, and with an air of offended dignity resumed his mask. Coligni coloured, and passing his hand over his brow, appeared distressed by vexing thoughts, and remained totally abstracted from all that was passing, whilst D'Andelot again passionately urged a continuance of the war, and ended by asking the Knight's opinion.

"I am for peace," he calmly replied.

"For peace," cried D'Andelot and Condé at

once, — " For peace ! — impossible ! — explain, explain."

" It is easy," replied the Knight, — " the arguments offered for a continuance of the war are bad in principle, and in the execution would be terrible. It is our duty to stop, not urge on these horrid wars, which steep our wretched country in her children's blood. Out on thee, D'Andelot ! would *you* turn persecutor?"

" Aye, to my enemies," cried D'Andelot, starting up with great violence. " The indignities, cruelties, insults they have heaped upon us warrant our deepest vengeance. Their enmity is implacable,—so is mine. I have been robbed of my rank, my fortune, and, could it have been, mine honour had been blasted. I owe them more hatred than I can ever pay; and my thirst for vengeance cannot be appeased till they be humbled with the dust."

" It is not from revenge that I would vote for a continuance of the war," said the Marechal Biron, when D'Andelot paused. The past I can forgive, and for myself could bear to con-

template the most cruel death for my faith : — but I hold it a duty due to a faithful posterity, to gain all we can for them."

" For them, Biron, God will provide," replied Coligni ; — " he suffers persecutions as trials of his children's faith and patience ; yet they should not turn persecutors : let us covet above all things the divine attribute of forbearance. When I first consented to take up arms, it was in defence of that religion which is dear to my soul, — for the Church whose altar is love, — her high Priest, our once meek and suffering Saviour. But do as ye will ; our king and our countrymen have been cruel to us ; it is enough that we know to whom retribution belongs."

A dead silence followed Coligni's last speech, which was at length broken by the Black Knight, who pointing to the papers which lay upon a table, close by him, said, " I will sign for peace, — who will not ?"

Condé, who had sat from the time of the Knight's entrance, in gloomy silence, his head resting upon his hand, whilst the passions of his

heart warred with the conviction which dawned upon his mind, and made him angry with himself, irresolute and impatient, suddenly started at the Knight's question, crying, — "I too will sign for peace; but surely on *me* will not fall the reproaches of the league when they rue their tameness."

CHAPTER XXII.

MANY years had heavily passed away since Raymond de Moreau had been torn from the monastery of St. Augustin, and his friends believing that he was dead, had ceased to make any inquiry concerning his mysterious fate. But Edessa, in spite of all probability, would hope that he still lived; she could not persuade her heart to think of him as being no longer an inhabitant of the earth; and guided, unknown to herself, by the latent feeling which kept alive the affections of her nature, she steadily refused to take the veil, firmly withstanding every argument used by Father Anthony in favour of a monastic life. But another trial awaited her.—Victor d'Espernon, emboldened by Raymond's absence, and encouraged by Catherine, and the

Marquis de Louvois, would for hours sit at her feet, and with timid devotedness sigh his love. Edessa could not spurn him, he was too noble and too melancholy; but she would turn her head away and weep. His gentle voice wrung tears of sad memory from her widowed heart, and brought back the words, the looks, of her lost Raymond. She loved, yet she dreaded to have her faithful memory thus revived, — but it was fatal to her health, and Father Anthony observed with alarm, that her slow step was scarcely firm, and her fragile form revealed how deep an hold an earthly sorrow had taken in her mind. Knowing that the strength of her love for Raymond would prevent the possibility of her ever finding happiness in the world without him, — the good Father, at length, prevailed upon her to become a boarder in the Monastery of St. Agnes, near St. Germains, with the fond hope, of by degrees, overcoming her present decided repugnance to taking the veil. But from the hour of her entering the monastery, her spirit seemed wrapt in unbroken gloom; and

regarding all that passed around in fearful silence, she shrunk with an expression of loathing from the kind sisters, who endeavoured to comfort her. Religion did not assuage her grief, her morbidly sensitive conscience, poisoned by the false notions instilled into her early youth, made her shrink from the inquiring boldness of her mind, and turn from the breathings of that spirit which can alone impart peace and heavenly healthfulness to the soul. On Edessa, the sorrows of life pressed heavily, for the mist of superstition presented to her ardent gaze; the "Sun of righteousness" shorn of his renovating beams; and faithful, yet doubting, she loved her Saviour, not in joy, but in tears.

The purple mist of evening hung over the distant hills, and the soft twilight of a glowing summer's day was stealing over the shadowy avenues which led to the secluded monastery of of St. Agnes, as Father Anthony rode slowly towards the principal entrance. He was met by a lay-brother, who bent humbly to him, expecting the Priest's usual mild salutation, —

but he dismounted in silence, and entering the monastery with an air of grave dejection, immediately proceeded, unannounced, to Edessa's apartment. There he found her, seated by an open window, numbed with her own sad musings; her pale cheek resting upon her arm, whilst the light evening breeze played with the soft ringlets of her golden hair, and the rising star's pale ray glistened in the tears which hung on the silken lashes of her downcast eyes. Her prayer book had fallen at her feet, and the untold beads hung unnoticed from her girdle. Father Anthony (guessing what was passing in her mind,) approached her saying,

"Edessa, — it is weak and sinful of you to allow your thoughts thus constantly to dwell upon Raymond."

"O father, do not chide me," she replied, raising her head, and looking mournfully at him. "Love is enduring, hoping, believing, — in vain I strive against it, — it is divine, — it is divine."

"To love with constancy, maiden, is noble;

but to oppose reason and truth, is sinful. Raymond, — surely you must know that he is dead."

"No, father, he lives, suffering under some huge injury."

"What then? — he lives a heretic? — therefore is for ever lost to you. Why will ye not learn, Edessa, that mortals may attain a feeling far above human love? If religion fills the mind, it must ever be a stranger to despair. Let your perplexed soul fly from these earthly troubles to Him, who alone can dry up the great sources of your grief; — who will teach you to enjoy the fragrance of that eternal land to which you are fast approaching."

"Father, I believe that there is an elevated dignity — a solid comfort in true religion; but alas! I know it not. Nothing satisfies me, — there is a continual sighing of the spirit which well nigh suffocates me."

"My daughter, this should not be. — Repeat the rosary of our blessed Lady with faith, and she will help your infirmities. Edessa, you

have neglected to fight for your soul's salvation, and are surrounded by darkness."

"O father, you misjudge me. — I am not so lost. What but faith in the intercession of the saints has supported me these many dreary years ?—the Jesus Psalter, is my constant morning prayer, — each evening, before her pure image, I repeat thrice the litany of the blessed Virgin. Though internal grief has worn my voice faint, I sing, when the midnight bell awakes to prayer, a hymn to our Saviour Jesus; but all is vain. I think upon the agonies of the cross, — I call upon our most admirable mother, — upon St. Michael, — on the blessed spirits, — angels, — patriarchs, — saints."

"Edessa, it will be thus, — your prayers will remain unanswered till you renounce the world, and resolve to live out your span of life in the peaceful cloister. It is in vain that you utter acts of faith, and address prayers to the whole army of saints, whilst your heart lingers in the world."

Edessa shuddered, and turning pale, whispered, — "There is perfidy in a cloister."

"Maiden, the empire of will is still your own, — in this strong temptation *will* death to prejudice."

"Father, I have tried my strength, but it fails me. Spite of justice and reason, I loath monks, nuns, convents, monasteries; — the cloister bell distracts me."

"Edessa, I mourn over and detest the perfidy practised upon you and Raymond: but let our indignation burn only towards the guilty. The matin and the vesper bell, is sweet harmonising music to a well-tuned spirit; — the solemn peace of a cloister is peace to a meditative soul; and the pious brothers and sisters, who employ the brief hours of this transient life in preparing for eternity, we should venerate and love."

Edessa remained silent for several minutes; then looking steadily at Father Anthony, she said, "Urge me no more, — I do venerate and love the good, but will not take the veil. To

retire from the world would be to offer no living sacrifice to God; — for what is the world to me since grief has laid its paralyzing hand upon my spirit?"

"Edessa, start not, —you force from me the truth, and must hear it; if you refuse the veil, you must become the bride of Victor d'Espernon."

Edessa turned contemptuously away, saying, "I would rather die."

"We cannot die when we will," replied Father Anthony, "and I once more intreat you to fly where your steady soul will find content."

"O, Father, leave me, I will be content. The inclosing walls of a convent I cannot bear, for I love with ardour the balmy breath of liberty."

"Maiden, the Christian is ever free: — raised by the wings of faith and works, high above this terrene world, the beauties of the earth are dull and lifeless compared with the splendour of the glorious dwelling-place of Mary and her blessed Son. — Hesitate no longer,

Edessa, to become the spouse of Christ, and thus insure your perfect happiness. The aspect of worldly things will change; by his love your every sense will be refined: the Virgin Mother and the Archangel Michael, at the head of the heavenly host, with holy hymns of joy and praise, will make heaven resound on your bright nuptial day. Choose, then, between the two lots offered to you. It is the Queen's command."

"O! hopeless fate!—the Queen's command?"

"Aye, within three months you must take the veil, or be Victor d'Espernon's bride."

Edessa started, and turning deadly pale, buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The melancholy captive paced his vast and gloomy dungeon with a slow and heavy step; his tall and youthful form was bent by suffering, and his lips were parched by the fever of despair, that burnt up and for ever quenched the springing freshness of his once ardent, hopeful spirit. The days of many years he had passed in dark and unprofitable solitude; each day had been an age; each hour a weight of aching, lingering moments, marked by a longing gasp to feel the breath of heaven. The encroaching hand of cold captivity stole from the lonely prisoner's heart the fluttering hopes

it fain, in its darkness, would have fed upon; whilst imagination tortured his madly active soul, showing him the gorgeous glories of a summer sun, or some bold mountain, covered with flowers and woods, standing an emblem of healthful liberty; — till his cheated spirit, awakening from its dream, died within him. The simplest flower that blooms beneath the canopy of heaven had been grateful to the captive's eye; — though dull with sorrow, he would have hung with tearful rapture over the wonder and the beauty of a thing, unvalued and neglected by those who revel amongst nature's glowing scenes beneath a noontide sun. In vain the sad inmate of this extensive dungeon pined to behold once more the golden day-star rise in triumphant majesty; his days were gloom — his nights darkness and desolation. He had nought to look upon, — no book cheered his Christian soul; the music of the human voice never sounded in his ear; his own was hoarse and broken. Yet he bore his cross with patience,

save when some blithe bird would pause near the narrow loop-hole of the prison, and sing in awakening strains his wild song of liberty.

At the base of one of the many massive pillars which supported the black roof of the dungeon, was a large iron coffin, inclosing the remains of a prisoner who, after death, was more distinguished than others who, like him, had languished in that gaping tomb till their dejected spirits were summoned from the tyranny of mortals like themselves, leaving their bones to moulder where the weary soul had breathed its last sigh in the world of woe. The living captive loved these blackening relics of mortality -- they were his sole companions; the remnants of past suffering had trembled with joy and hope, sorrow and despair; and the altar where he daily laid his offering of tears, was the coffin of the noble victim of a startling treachery.

From day to day the prisoner's dim and hollow eyes watched the faint golden ray that

streaked his dungeon's wall, and to his aching sight it seemed as though the tardy sun paused and lengthened out the hours of despair; yet when day sunk, and left him wrapt in darkness, the darkness seemed eternal, till another day appeared slowly dragging on its measured pace —then night again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Treaty of Chartres, after all the heart-burnings and contentions it caused, was but ill kept by either party. The stipulated conditions were not punctually regarded by the Catholics, and, in consequence, the Huguenots refused to disband the whole of their troops; and, full of suspicion removed their camp, for better security, near their stronghold, Rochelle, under the pretence of not having the means immediately to discharge the arrears due to the troops. Soon after the conditions for peace had been signed, the Prince of Condé and Coligni repaired secretly to Paris, in order to discover the temper of the Court, and to meet many of their most zealous and cautious partisans, to consult concerning the necessary arrangements for the fu-

ture safety of the reformers. In the mean time, whilst the other chief commanders were allowed to retire to their respective homes, to enjoy a brief repose, D'Andelot and the Black Knight were left in charge of the camp; and although they had for many years fought for the same cause, and were known to be intrepid and generous beyond any in the Huguenot camp, yet, when they met, they simply exchanged courtesies as strangers: for the Knight, ever reserved and distant in his bearing, avoided all unnecessary intercourse, and D'Andelot was too proud and independent to seek his friendship. The mystery which hung over the person and history of the Black Knight, no single event had, from the time of his joining the Huguenots (a space of more than twelve years), in the slightest way removed; but, giving little heed to the curiosity his extreme reserve excited, he continued, in peace or war, to remain unknown. Bitterly repenting having unmasked when he entered the assembly at Chartres, as it had exposed him to Coligni's lively interest, he

afterwards secluded himself more than ever: carefully avoiding the tilting matches and martial exercises which were constantly going on near the camp. His tent was always pitched at some distance from the general camp, and no stranger was ever, upon any pretence, admitted to disturb the secluded soldier. It was supposed that his leisure was devoted to some deep study; and often, when the last faint rays of twilight lingered over the silent evening, he was seen slowly stealing from his lonely tent, to lave his thoughtful brow in the freshness of the balmy air, and to wander where he could, unseen, watch the bright stars, as they one by one bespangled the deep blue vault of heaven. By nature, this stranger to his fellow men was bold, aspiring, and haughty; but it was thought that early misfortunes had tempered these dangerous qualities— for his boldness ever listened to the voice of prudence; and sorrow, or religion, had greatly subdued his ambition and his pride.

One evening, about a month after the com-

mencement of the peace, a tall and aged woman was seen slowly advancing, in an opposite direction from Rochelle, towards the camp. The setting sun threw his red beams full upon the dark banner which waved over the Knight's tent, as it stood conspicuously aloof from all the rest upon the plain. The woman lingered as she drew near it, and, shading her eyes with her hand, threw back her stately form, and paused to read the motto inscribed upon the banner. "Aye, God is just," she muttered to herself, as she advanced to the tent,—"persecuting winds may assail, but not uproot the faithful."

"Who dares draw nearer?" demanded a sentinel, as the stranger approached.

"I am come to see the Black Knight, not to answer the uncourteous questions of his servants," replied the stranger. "Conduct me to him;—time, that is precious to him and to me, flies."

"Stand back," cried the sentinel, "I have denied greater than you admittance here; though

you were a witch, you could not enter but by permission."

"You do my errand then to your captain, whilst I wait without his inhospitable tent,—give him this ring, and tell him that Fulda sends it to him."

The guard, impressed by her authoritative air, took from her a small case in which the ring was enclosed, and handing it to a page, bade him take it to the Knight. He was not absent many minutes, and on his return respectfully bidding Fulda enter, immediately conducted her into the Knight's presence. He was standing pale, and trembling with some aroused remembrance of past horror, holding in his hand a large and brilliant ring ; — he started as Fulda entered, and turning away his head, waved his hand for her to advance. — The conference that ensued was long and painful.

"Be prompt," was Fulda's parting injunction, as she put a large key into the Knight's hand.

"I will," he replied, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

In less than an hour, the Black Knight, followed by his band, galloped across the plain, and before the dawn, arrived at the little town of Saumur, on the banks of the Loire. From thence he more leisurely pursued an uninterrupted route, until, at the close of the following day, he reached a thick and almost impenetrable wood, on the southern border of Normandy. The Knight, in stern silence heading his troop, plunged into the darkening thicket; but he was no stranger to its secluded paths; every turning was known to him; and though he frequently paused, it was not to refresh his memory to find his way, but to recal some sweet remembrances of the past, or to struggle to stifle a vivid and deeply painful recollection. He appeared to have forgotten the presence of his band, and exclamations of indignation and rage constantly escaped him. His followers hung back, and viewed with alarm and astonishment his altered demeanour; but when they emerged from the thicket, his emotions became stronger, and more visible, and in a

suppressed and hollow voice he commanded them to retire within the shadow of the wood, until he gave the signal to advance.

Turning his head in another direction from that to which he guided his charger, as if fearful of looking on, the Knight rapidly advanced along the skirts of the wood, until, suddenly turning an angle, a solitary castle, standing upon a lofty eminence, burst upon his sight. —The waning moon, red and clouded, hovered over the high and grey battlements, throwing uncertain shadows around the grim pile. The Knight paused, and unclasping his visor, wiped away the cold drops of mental suffering, as they gathered thick upon his brow. With a strong effort he drove off the sickening faintness, which for a time threatened to subdue his strength; and, slowly advancing in front of the castle, he gazed long upon its peaceful grandeur, and the stern outline of its imposing features. Not a sound broke the silence of the night, save the measured tramp of his charger, as, wrapt in bitter reflections, the mysterious Knight twice made

a wide circuit of the broad moat which surrounded the castle. At length, stopping opposite to a low and strongly secured door, on the northern side of the fortress, he gave a long, shrill whistle, and in a few moments was surrounded by his troop. Taking a large key from his belt, he pointed to the door, and, without uttering a word, plunged into the moat. The landing on the opposite side was effected by the troop with difficulty, but with so much caution, that not a single inhabitant of the castle had the least warning of their approach. The Knight (who, from the time of his interview with Fulda, seemed to be impelled by a violence of feeling directly opposed to his usual calm and self-possessed air) thrust the key into the lock, and turning the rusty bolt, sword in hand, rapidly strode up the dark and narrow passage before his troop had time to follow him. Thrice he raised a horn to his lips, to blow a loud defying blast; but, checking the imprudent challenge, he led the way through mazes too intricate for a stranger's foot to have traced, until, with a

loud laugh, he burst into the principal hall of the castle; and commanding his followers to secure all they met, he advanced alone to a large gloomy apartment, where, in ignorance of what was passing beyond, sat, brooding over his wretchedness, the stern and sullen lord of the castle, Oswald d'Espernon, Marquis d'Ostun. His swarthy countenance was furrowed with traces of the darkest passions, and his eyes, prominent and penetrating, reminded the beholder of the black recesses of a soul like Tiberius Cæsar's.—The Knight, too, as he entered, was a startling object;—from head to foot incased in flexible armour, a naked sword in his hand, and no part of his person visible, save his flashing eyes. Oswald had often met the Knight in battle, and, from his extraordinary valour, had, in common with the Catholics (who generally knew of his mysterious conduct), looked upon him as a superhuman being, and with superstitious dread, avoided every chance of encountering his power. Starting from his seat as the object of his fear stood suddenly before

him, Oswald seized a whinyard which hung on the wall close by him, crying out, "The leader of the Black Band! — in the name of every fiend what brings you here?"

"I am come to the aid of the oppressed," cried the Knight, — "though not *yet* to avenge their wrongs."

"Insolent intruder," exclaimed D'Ostun, half-choaked with rage, "who are you who thus dare menace the Lord of Montreal?"

"The Lord of Montreal!" muttered the Knight, advancing and seizing Oswald by the collar of his robe, and holding him at arms' length — "are you the Lord of Montreal? Beware how you excite my ire, thou vilest son of the murderer Cain."

"Let go your hold," cried D'Ostun, struggling to get free from the Knight's nervous grasp. But soon perceiving that his efforts were useless, he flung aside his whinyard, and in an instant drawing a dagger from his belt, made a desperate thrust at the Knight, who, parrying the blow, threw Oswald upon the floor, and holding him

down, set the point of his sword at his throat, and sternly demanded the key of the deepest dungeon. — Unsubdued in spirit, Oswald remained steadfastly silent, until he read in the fiery eyes of the inflexible being who bent over him, that another moment's obstinacy would cost him his life.

"Stop, if you are not the devil,— let me rise, and you shall have the key."

"Rise, grey-headed sinner, and obey *me*. I know, what told, would make you tremble. Take that lamp, and at your peril refuse to lead the way to the dungeon I seek."

Pale with supernatural fear, D'Ostun arose, and silently prepared to obey the imperative command. Overawed by the indescribable superiority of the Knight's air, his ferocious nature was changed to a timid compliance; and, taking up the lamp, signified that he was ready to go where directed. The Knight summoned two of his band to attend him, and they, preceded by Oswald, after traversing a tedious and loathsome way, arrived at a small square room, at

the bottom of a steep flight of steps. The Knight took the lamp from Montrece, and commanded him to await his return; and placing the soldiers near as a guard, he left him, trembling with a subduing fear which his natural courage in vain attempted to combat, a very slave of feelings till then unknown to his daring spirit. In the mean time, the Knight proceeded on his way alone, and as he drew near the dungeon, hung lingering back, as if oppressed by some fearful recollection; his steps faultered, and labouring for breath to proceed, he paused, and for many minutes leant against the wall for support. The single lamp he carried disclosed the shadowy horrors of dampness and decay; and he fancied that he heard again the echoing sighs he once there *had heard.* Starting forward, as if to divert by action his awakened memory, he drew back the massive bolt of the dungeon's door, and with an uncertain step crossed its threshold. Lifting the lamp above his head, he looked around; — the coffin resting by the pillar caught his eye, and advancing towards it,

with bursting emotion, he stretched his arms over the tomb of the mortal he lamented: and for some time terrified nature threatened to give way before the grief which shook his strong frame with convulsive agony. A deep sigh, at length, recalled the Knight's recollection;— slowly rising from the ground, he took up the lamp, and near the single narrow loop-hole of the dungeon, close by a mouldering skeleton, he beheld, stretched in feverish sleep, a tall and emaciated form. The Knight wept in silence over him, and gently putting his hand upon his shoulder, in a low voice whispered, "Raymond de Moreau, awake!" — The captive started at the whispered sound, and, wildly gazing at his deliverer, in a hollow and hurried voice, cried, "It is a vision! — yet speak to me — do I dream?"

"Arise, Raymond, — I am come to set you free."

Raymond attempted to rise, but from weakness and the surprise of joy, fell at the Knight's feet in a swoon. When he recovered and found

himself supported in the arms of the hero he had never ceased to remember with admiration and esteem, he sunk upon his knees, and, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, long remained, undisturbed by his deliverer, wrapt in fervent and unspeakable gratitude to the Supreme Guide of all events; then clasping the Knight's hand in his feverish and trembling grasp, he pointed in silence to the door. The Knight, after embracing him with deep emotion, supported him until they reached the spot where Oswald was left guarded. He had had time to meditate on his situation, which had greatly revived his courage; and when the Knight said, "Raymond de Moreau, in the presence of your gaoler I declare you free," D'Ostun, with furious haste, planted himself before Raymond, and dared him to advance.

"Move him out of the way," cried the Knight, contemptuously, to his guards.

"Haughty insulter, who art thou? Speak, robber — traitor — villain, speak!" cried Oswald, stamping with rage.

The Knight fixed his fiery eyes upon him, and between his teeth muttered — "If you would learn who I am, follow me."

D'Ostun, blinded by his passion, followed him without observing the way, until he found himself standing by the iron coffin, and opposite to the Knight, who, in a low, unearthly voice, asked, as he pointed to the coffin,—"Who lies murdered there?"

Oswald attempted to stagger from the bier, and, placing his hands before his eyes, in a tremulous voice, answered—"He was not murdered — I deny the charge."

"When insult, suspense, grief, and despair, wring the indignant soul — when languor, pain, and captivity depress the pining body unto death — is it not cruelly murdered?"

"He was not murdered, but what was he to thee?"

"Behold!" cried the Knight, and baring his head, he raised the lamp above his pale features, and calmly fixed his full expressive eyes

upon the terror-stricken Oswald, who, springing backward, grasped his hair in an agony of horror, and with his eyes still glaring upon the terrific Knight, fell stiff and senseless at his feet.

CHAPTER XXV.

"So the proud daughter of the Marquis de Louvois presumes still to resist my wishes," said Catherine to the Cardinal of Lorraine, at the close of a long conference on the morning of the day that Raymond reached in safety the Huguenot camp at Rochelle, under the protection of the Black Knight.

"Your Majesty should command the Lady Edessa's obedience," replied the Cardinal; "young maidens should be early taught that obedience is always for their good. But de Louvois's daughter believes that her lover Raymond de Moreau still lives."

"And why does he still live?" asked Catherine, reddening with passion. "I have all but bid

that superstitious fool, Oswald d'Espernon, to dispatch him."

"We will talk more about this puny boy, by your Majesty's permission, anon. The brilliant moments, when the worst enemy of the faith shall cease to be, are approaching. My mind can think of no petty triumph now,—I can only anticipate the glorious time when harmony shall reign in France, and Catherine de Medicis and her monarch sons be at peace, surrounded by the faithful."

Catherine's eyes shone with hope and ambitin, and soon after the King making his appearance, the Cardinal of Lorraine withdrew, saying, he would immediately confer with Victor d'Espernon, and then send him to the Queen.

As the Cardinal closed the door, Charles put his hand on Catherine's shoulder, saying, "Well, mother, busy plotting?"

The Queen, offended by the familiarity of his manner, gravely asked, "Is your Majesty disposed to listen to the business of moment that presses upon me?"

The king, with a mockery of respect, bowed profoundly to Catherine, as he replied, "Your *majesty* is always ready to attend to pressing affairs, — *I* am not."

"Be serious Charles, — why then, if it does not please you, do you leave all to me?"

Charles smiled, and with affected carelessness answered, "One sovereign will fill one throne, madame; a crown can be worn but by one at a time."

"What do you mean Charles?" asked Catherine, with rising anger.

"To wish your majesty a good day," was the reply.

The queen, disguising her indignation at his contemptuous manner, exclaimed, "Are you ignorant, that since the truce, Paris has been full of Huguenots? and that they are every hour flocking from all quarters thither?"

Charles, who had strolled to an open window, turned suddenly round, asking with great animation, "Where should the people flock but round their king?"

"Do you mean Condé, or Coligni?" inquired the Queen.

Charles felt the sarcasm, but making no reply, she continued in the same ironical tone, "Perhaps you may condescend to invite the Huguenot king to court."

"Perhaps I may," replied Charles, concealing under a careless air the deep impression her taunts made upon his mind; "but I cannot think now."

"True," rejoined Catherine, with scornful composure; "your mind seems to be a vacuum."

Charles laughed out, and advancing to the door, cried, "Good mother, you are right; my thoughts are not so sprightly as yours; there are often large spaces left betwixt them."

"Trifling fool," muttered Catherine, as he disappeared, "how could I ever, for one moment, dread the possibility of *his* being fit to reign?"

But Catherine, skilled as she was in reading what was passing in the minds of all about her,

was outwitted by Charles; who hid under a careless and indifferent air, the discontent and jealousy rankling in his heart. He knew that his mother's talents were great, but could not bear the thought of being kept for ever in subjection to her, and determined to watch for an opportunity to throw off the yoke she imposed upon him: but that time never came; and Catherine, whilst she hated him, contrived to retain a strong hold upon his natural affections to his dying hour. About an hour after the Cardinal Lorraine had left the Queen, according to a previous arrangement, Victor d' Espernon waited in her private room of audience. As she entered, as if a sudden thought had crossed her mind, she abruptly asked, "Who is the warrior the Huguenots boast so much of, — the Black Knight they call him?"

"His name, madame," replied Victor; "is not known, even by the generals of the rebels; but it is said, that his address is mild and insinuating, and that he possesses the formidable qualities of courage and prudence. I have my-

self often seen him in battle, and he has the true mein of a hero."

"Is he French?"

"Yes, madame, his tongue bespeaks him to be Norman."

"Ah! exclaimed Catherine, "he is your countryman then!" — She looked steadily at Victor, awaiting some reply. Her strange manner embarrassed him, but totally ignorant of what was passing in her darkened mind, he answered, —

"Were he not your majesty's enemy, I should be proud to acknowledge him as my countryman."

"Time will reveal who he is," said Catherine; then lowering her voice, she asked, "Have you seen Coligni?"

"Yes madame," replied Victor, colouring deeply, "I met him yesterday evening by the Hotel Dieu."

"Was he alone?"

"He was, and walked with the confidence of one who is at peace with all men. I paused

upon the bridge St. Charles, to gaze on his benevolent countenance."

The Queen looked angrily at Victor, and with some surprise, asked, "Has Lorraine breathed to you my deathful secret."

Victor answered by an involuntary shudder.

Catherine trembled with internal rage. "And you hesitated," she whispered with vehemence. "O Victor d'Espernon, beware! my wrath is majestic, terrific as the pillar of the desert, riding upon the wings of the wind. If you dare prove false to me, craven-hearted coward! hide thee in the dust."

Victor stept back, and raising his head, fixed his flashing eyes upon the Queen, as, making a strong effort to be calm, he answered, — "He who could prove false to his faith, would hide him in the dust for fear of the creature's wrath; — but I would only so humble myself in fear of the anger of that God who has said, — 'Thou shalt do no murder.'"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Catherine, repressing her swelling indignation, — "think you not that

devils laugh, whilst angels mourn, to hear one who professes to fight for the faith, refuse to stab the hydra that is for ever rising against the true Church?"

"It would be an ever living disgrace to the Church and throne," continued Victor, not heeding the Queen's question. "My mind has been in a fever from the time my ear listened to the treacherous plot. My imagination, as in a wild dream, shows me hideous things. If he had stolen here as a spy, it had been horrible to have cut him off; but now, when we have sworn a truce!—No madame, I cannot consent to load my conscience with that, which would make my after-thoughts so bitter."

"We will send for your father, Oswald, to talk to us of tender consciences," replied Catherine with a laugh of contempt. "But no matter, my lord, *you* must die as well as Coligni, spite of conscience."

"If Coligni must die, could your majesty find none to execute your stern purpose but me?—

one who already has no joy in life by reason of hidden sin,— one who already sighs under the grievous burden of a conscience ill at ease?"

Catherine appeared touched by Victor's melancholy and earnest questions. There was a hopelessness and languor in his manner, which gave peculiar force to all he said; and his pleading to be spared the remorse of participating in further guilt would have been irresistable to any but Catherine. She was, however, for the moment affected, and after some hesitation replied, with an expression of mildness and feeling, — "I will urge it no more; but do not blame me, Victor; you know I love you as my own son; and whom should an anxious mother trust with her most fearful secret but her valued son? — who could I trust in this but you? — who is there more faithful in bearing the contumely of others' crimes than you?"

Victor was deeply affected; and bending on one knee, kissed Catherine's extended hand, and again implored her to forego her dark purpose:

"Will no entreaties, no words of mine avail to save your honour from degradation, and Coligni's life?"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Queen, turning from him with anger and contempt. "Plead no more for the heretic leader; — and, Victor d'Espernon, in vain shall you plead for yourself. — He who knows of a plot, and condemns it, is the worst of spies."

"My life, madame, I am weary of, — take it when you will; —but whilst living I could never betray that which you would hide."

The Queen trembled with passion. Finding that he remained steadfast in his refusal to be her active and murderous agent, and continued equally unmoved by her tenderness or threats, she passionately exclaimed, — "No, I will not trust you, — small birds sing, — those of majestic growth alone are silent." — Victor slowly rose, and bending lowly, begged leave to retire.

Catherine looked at him for several moments, and the expression of her countenance changing

from wrath to gentleness, she took from her bosom an amulet, and giving it into his hand, said, — "Wear, this Victor, it is a charm to preserve you from every evil: be silent, or, walls nor towers shall save thee from my vengeance!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"MUST I again listen to the deafening cries of war?" exclaimed Coligni.—"My life, aye a thousand, had I them to give, would I resign to buy peace for my distracted country. O God! why do not men reverence each other more, and love themselves less!"

"Then you begin to see, that 'la paix boiteuse et mal-assise' is not likely to hold," said the Prince of Condé, with rather a taunting air.

He was just returned from a midnight meeting (which Coligni from indisposition had been unable to attend) of the principal Huguenots in Paris, held in an obscure house near the Church of St. Etienne du Mont; and was ignorant of the fatal intelligence which had, in the mean time, reached the admiral, and thrown him into

an unusual state of anxiety. He paced the room with his hands clasped before him, and as if he had not heard Condé's observation, continued to bewail the prospect of a renewed war. "O!" he cried, "I should faint at the thought, but God is the strength of my soul."

"What has happened?" asked Condé, alarmed by Coligni's desolate and distressed air,— "surely somewhat dreadful."

"Tell me first what passed at the meeting," said Coligni, endeavouring to assume a composure he was far from feeling.

"But little," answered the Prince, looking anxiously at him. "Du Foix proposed remonstrating with Catherine for allowing the execrable Feux Ardens to be daily fed with Huguenot victims; but I opposed him, for I have done with sanctioning any further intercourse, or negociation with that treacherous woman. She will do what she will, and, to use good arguments with her, is like pouring honey and milk into a poisoned cup. Nothing further of import passed; but what have I to learn from you?"

"Fatal news:—the last dispatches from Germany have been seized and forwarded to the Louvre."

"When, and where," — cried Condé, starting from his seat; "we are ruined, — by all that is sacred we are ruined!"

"They were seized within two leagues of our own camp at Rochelle."

"The dispatches from Germany seized near Rochelle?"

"Yes, — they were intrusted to the favourite follower of Casimir, disguised as an English monk. Finding that the Papists were every where suspicious, and that it was impossible for him to reach Paris in safety; he determined to try to get to the camp, but was seized by a troop of Switzers within two leagues of Rochelle, — Catherine has since read and burnt the papers."

"I will not credit it," exclaimed Condé: "it is a story hatched to terrify us. Have we yet to learn the dissimulation of Catherine and her son?"

"Du Lancray was in the anti-chamber at the Louvre when they were brought in by the Cardinal of Lorraine; and they together examined the seals whilst Victor d'Espernon remained in close conference with the Queen."

"The Cardinal of Lorraine is as wily as his mistress," replied Condé, "and I half believe deceived Du Lancray, suspecting him of being our friend, that we through him may be deceived; but if it be true, I will not trust myself here much longer."

"I have no doubt of its truth," rejoined Coligni; "he has described to me the secret marks, and when Catherine gave him audience, spite of her efforts to be calm, she could not entirely conceal her triumph. We must resolve, and quickly, what is next to be done. — Hark! who comes?" A hurried, and heavy step in the corridor beyond, drew their attention, and Condé, ever suspicious of treachery, whilst within the influence of the court, drew his sword and stood prepared to defend himself against any sudden attack, but the entrance of D'Andelot, covered

with dust and flushed with fatigue, turned the tide of his fears; and putting aside his sword, he eagerly inquired the cause of D'Andelot's unexpected appearance.

"You must quit Paris by break of day; the Black Knight has broken the truce, and put all our lives in jeopardy."

"The Black Knight!"

"Aye, actuated by some private wrong, he, two nights since, broke into the castle of Montreal, and rescuing a prisoner from its dungeon, left the lying, vindictive Castilian, Oswald d'Espernon, furious for revenge. When the Knight returned to the camp, foreseeing the dreadful consequences which might follow his imprudence, I did not stay to censure him, but mounted my fleetest horse, and have travelled like the wind, to warn you of the danger you will be in, when d'Ostun's messenger shall arrive."

"We are in a net, and cannot escape," exclaimed Coligni, with much bitterness. "Oswald's complaints are before the Queen, ere this.

Who would have suspected the Black Knight of violence, and imprudence?"

"Let us away on the instant," cried the Prince of Condé triumphantly; "thanks to the brave Knight, we must defend ourselves! — He has not broken the treaty of Chartres; our enemies have done it, though we have been too tame to resent their perfidy. I will send to Francois de Monins to warn all of the danger."

"Let the guilty fly," said Coligni; "I will not."

"You must,—you shall," interrupted Condé. "I cannot go without you, let D'Andelot return to the camp, whilst, to avoid pursuit, we make for my castle of Noyers in Burgundy."

"The waning moon has passed her meridian, and the morning star is getting dim," exclaimed D'Andelot, as he pushed open the window.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was about the noon of the same day that Condé and Coligni fled from Paris, that the Queen, according to her general custom, (when not deeply involved in state affairs,) repaired to the apartments of her two young and beautiful daughters, Margaret and Claude, who were busily employed, with several ladies of the court, in embroidering a rich piece of tapestry for the Queen's boudoir in the Palais de Tuilleries, which was then being erected under Catherine's direction; who, amidst all her intrigues and political crimes, preserved the unbounded love for the fine arts, and munificent spirit which distinguished above all others the princely family from which she sprung. Encouraging genius with the ardour of a kindred

spirit, and paying enthusiastic reverence to the memory of Francis the First, she tried to excel him, in the perfection of the works of art with which it was her delight to be surrounded. Whilst making some observations on the design which the Princesses were embroidering, the Queen remarked that they had been disputing; and twisting one of Margaret's beautiful ringlets round her finger, she asked, why Claude had been weeping.

"I have not been weeping, Madame," replied Claude, her eyes flashing fire as she spoke. "Margaret insults me."

"Fye," exclaimed the Queen, "such violence is unbecoming your birth."

"Margaret bent her large blue eyes upon the floor, and in a low voice replied, "Claude pitied the Huguenots, and that of course led to a quarrel."

"Most gracious mother, I only in play pretended to pity the Huguenots. I loath them even more than she does, though I love Guise less." Margaret blushed deeply, and

the Queen observing her confusion, drew a deep sigh, ejaculating, "Ah! many a tear have I shed for my deluded subjects, wicked and hardened as they are."

"*Your* subjects!" muttered Claude, in an under tone, intended to be heard only by Mademoiselle Touchet, who sat close by her, (and was secretly beloved by Charles) but Catherine's senses, rendered acute and suspicious, by continual exercise, could not be deceived: she heard the remark; and a frown of displeasure clouded her brow. Margaret, ignorant of the cause of her anger, to divert her attention observed,—

"I believe the heretics are very wicked; there is not a noble soul amongst them."

"You mistake," cried Claude; "there are some of the noblest spirits in France amongst them: Condé, and many of the Princes of the blood: Coligni, and the Black Knight Guise told us of. Madame, what will the King do with these gallant warriors when they are in his power?"

"Ask what will become of the faithful, and

not waste your thoughts on rebels," replied Catherine angrily.

"The feux ardens, the damp dungeons, and the tortures prepared for these opposers of the faith, almost make me pity them," said Margaret.

"Aye," replied Catherine, with animation, "a speedy death were more merciful."

"Madame, may they not be convinced by the truth, if mildly urged?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Claude, "convince them whilst they writhe beneath the spear, in the thunder of battle!—O if *I* were king of France, I would exterminate them; no prince or peer should dare rebel against me; I would watch them with the open eye of ever restless jealousy."

Catherine regarded Claude with astonishment; "You have too much of your mother in you," she thought, as she silently gazed upon her haughty and glowing countenance; and now more than ever convinced that her power

over her children's minds, as they advanced in life, must mainly depend on her keeping their daring spirits asunder, she observed with unnatural satisfaction that her daughters contradicted each other, and quarrelled about the merest trifle.

Whilst they were contending, with ill-suppressed rage, about a copy of verses which Claude had pulled from Margaret's bosom,—Prince Henry entered the apartment. He was a tall and graceful youth, remarkable for the beauty of his person and sprightliness of his wit,—generous and brave in disposition, he was the idol of the young French nobility, and Catherine's favourite child. She gave way to him in every extravagance and folly that his fickle mind could devise, and made him, by her ill-placed indulgence, impatient of control, and inconsolable under disappointment. As he entered with a flushed, and angry countenance, he tripped in the matting that loosely covered the floor, and falling with considerable violence along the room, his sword which was not in its scabbard, striking against a large iron chest,

shivered to pieces. The suddenness of his appearance, and the noise of the fall, made Catherine start from her seat, and the princesses and the ladies scream.

"What horrid sounds, for nothing," exclaimed Henry, rising with much confusion, and rudely pushing Claude back, who had sprung forward to assist him. "Forgive me, mother, if I have alarmed you; I did not know that you were here, or I would not have fallen."

"Ha ha!" laughed Claude, "that is good! so you fell to frighten us—thank you; and did you break your sword to amuse us?"

The Prince looked aghast as be beheld the broken weapon, and stooping to take up a fragment which lay at his feet, ejaculated, "O, it was my brave father's sword."

"Aye," cried Claude, reddening with anger, and glancing at the Queen, "and none but such as he should have borne it :— a fine one you, to sue for Montmorenci's sword!"

Henry's eyes sparkled with rage; but before he could reply to Claude's taunting speech, Ca-

therine laid her hand upon his shoulder, saying, 'Come with me."

"Stay mother," he cried, half choked with passion. "Make her tell how she knew that I wished for the Constable's sword."

The Queen turned to Claude, who coloured as she said, "I will tell you, madame, but I will not let Henry hear."

"Speak," said Catherine, keeping her determined and steady eye upon Claude, who after some hesitation, sullenly answered, "Every one knows it, and all laugh at it."

"But who told you?"

"The King, madame, to amuse me yesternight whilst we danced."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"MOTHER," exclaimed Prince Henry, bursting into tears, "I foresee that I shall not get the sword: Charles laughs at me, and I have no friend but you."

"True Henry, but tears would not become a Constable of France; be careful to conceal this weakness; hide the boyish feelings which swell your heart, till I have gained for you all we want. Charles must *at length* yield to me."

"O no, it is all over; he and I have quarrelled, and I am sure he will not befriend me; though he bore my rage with calmness, he will remember it to my hurt. I told him *I would be* Constable *in spite of him*, but alas that cannot be."

"O you sad fool!" exclaimed Catherine,

turning pale with passion and disappointment; "is it thus that you have blasted your hopes? Was it the way to gain the honour you sighed for, to pettishly demand it as your right? Do ye not know that in the minds of kings, honours demanded as rights cease to be due? Could ye not for a little time cheat and flatter him? Look at me!—am not I the mother of the King of France? yet I, to gain the power I hold, fawned and flattered well. Wretched boy! your folly, for one hour, has ruined my long-matured, my darling schemes. How dare you be prouder than your mother? Will ye not stoop to kings? Shall I entreat for Montmorenci's sword? shall I beg and implore of the detested fool that wears the crown what you will not bend for?"

"O mother, I will kneel to you, but how can I to Charles?"

"Away with such folly: I see how it is; your haughty bearing has alarmed him; he will hold from you all he can. Hark!—I hear his step—fly—you must not be seen here."

She thrust Henry from her towards a private

door as she spoke, but he had scarcely time to disappear when the King, looking fagged and harassed, burst into the room, "Who has just left you, madame?" he asked, as he flung himself into a seat.

"Le Marechal de Tavannes," replied Catherine with perfect composure.

"Tavannes!" the very man I wish to see," exclaimed Charles, springing from the couch and pushing open the door at which the Prince had escaped, he ran down the passage shouting the Marechal's name, until he met a page, who told him that the Marechal de Tavannes had not passed that way.

"Who has then?" demanded the King with an angry air.

"Prince Henry, sire, he has just left her Majesty.

"O, Prince Henry was it!" muttered Charles, and slowly retracing his steps, he pettishly exclaimed, as he closed the door after him, "Tavannes must have heard me."

"So I should think," replied Catherine; "let

him be again summoned, he cannot yet have reached la grande galerie: but Charles, I wish, your amusements were less violent, you are looking horribly pale, and take no rest from exhausting games, from morning until evening."

"It is foolish," said Charles; "but you leave me nothing else to do. When you, madame, abdicate the crown, I will wear it and be more tranquil."

Catherine calmly replied, "I wore the crown only whilst your head was too weak to support it. When I remember what I have suffered for your sake, I think you basely ungrateful; my deeds speak for themselves, whether they be good or evil: but this I know, they merit more than your cold thanks."

Charles would have been touched by her speech, but the recollection of the lie she had told him rankled in his breast, and he tauntingly answered,

"Aye, madame, your care of my honour and my country's good, merit much thanks,—above all, I am grateful for your refusing, in my name,

to aid my distressed sister Mary of Scotland; and for the sudden dismissal of my faithful chancellor De l'Hôpital."

"We cannot get free of our own enemies; and De l' Hôpital was not a friend to the faith or to you;—but who comes? — some one knocks."

Charles went himself, and opened the door to a page who held a sealed letter in his hand, hesitating whether to present it to Catherine, or to the king; he at length gave it into the hand of the former; Charles turned away, and the Queen seeing that it was an express from D'Ostun, hastily read it over, and then offered it to the King, saying, "Read this, and quickly resolve upon what is to be done."

Charles took the letter, and after carefully reading it twice over, asked, "Who is the Black Knight?"

"A dishonourable Huguenot," cried Catherine: "ask Guise; he will tell you that he is somewhat to fear, as well as hate."

"Alas! it is only war!" ejaculated Charles; "I am weary of this continual strife with my

subjects. We must see our cousin Condé, touching this outrage."

Whilst the king was speaking, Victor d'Espernon, unannounced, entered into the royal presence, and bending on one knee, presented a paper. Charles, offended at the freedom, put by the paper, saying, "I know it already; you shall be revenged on these rebels; but I must first see the Prince of Condé or Coligni."

"Sire, the Prince of Condé and the Admiral Coligni fled from Paris before this morning's dawn."

"Ah! that is dark."

"I implore your majesty to give me the power, to seek to be revenged; if time is lost in deliberation, they will become too strong to be chastised."

"Then lose no time, my lord; take your own troop, and go in pursuit of the rebel leaders; but mark me! bring them back to Paris; do nothing of yourself; the truce is broken, but I must see Condé before we proclaim another war."

Catherine marked Victor's haughty look as he withdrew, and angrily observed, — "If we hope to subdue the Huguenots, we should employ against them their bitterest foes. Why not at once place Victor d'Espernon at the head of the army, that he may seize their strong hold at Rochelle, before they can muster to defend it? You have sent him to bring back Condé and Coligni, whilst the author of the outrage is allowed to triumph in security; let Victor be recalled, and give him wiser instructions."

"Nay, madame, let it rest;— if there is another war, I shall give the command of the royal army to my brother, not to Victor d'Espernon."

"To Henry?"

"Yes, mother; shall I not then oblige both him and you?"

"My best beloved son! you must oblige me yet more."

Charles shrunk from her touch with internal disgust, and stepping back, he bowed lowly, and assuming an air of grave sincerity, replied,

"I wish I could prove to you, madame, the depth of my esteem, devotion and respect ——"

"Stay," cried Catherine, interrupting him, "at least, be sincere with *me*."

"Madame, Retz and you, in teaching me to be king, taught that sincerity was a dangerous weakness; but I am always true to you. Good mother, tell me how can I oblige you?"

"Let the office of constable be filled forthwith."

"Is that all!" exclaimed Charles, turning away; "it shall be filled, — but no more at present, I am going to ride."

"Cannot ye attend to your country to-day, and ride to-morrow?" asked Catherine, with bitterness.

"No madame, — life has no to-morrow; we must not cheat ourselves; see, the golden sun is high: come, say quickly, what more would you have of me?"

"Stay, but for one little moment, and make it precious to your country, by naming a successor to Montmorenci."

"Did Tavannes advise this?"

"Aye, strongly and earnestly, not one hour since."

A dark frown clouded the king's brow; the palpable lie made him sick, adept as he was in falsehood and deceit. Fixing his haughty eyes upon Catherine, he proudly replied, — "I am the constable of France, and can carry its sword myself."

Catherine, astonished, and irritated beyond measure, at this unprecedented overthrow of her long contemplated scheme, with considerable violence upbraided Charles for the part he had acted, in keeping alive his brother's hopes, and then so suddenly crushing them.

"I know," replied the king, colouring deeply, "that you think my brother Henry, young as he is, would make a better constable than I; mais n'importe, — we differ."

"Ungrateful fool! if you thus continue to defy and insult me, I will abandon the court, and leave you to govern this convulsed country alone."

"I regard no longer the rancour of your threats," retorted Charles; "I have heard them too often. I never will make Henry master of my subjects, whilst I live."

"He never can be, whilst you live, — how can he? — what demon possesses your jealous brain?"

"Come, good mother, be patient, — farewell, till we meet again. Henry and I are brothers, do not make us foes."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The castle of Noyers, in Burgundy, to which the Huguenot chiefs fled, was a strong fortress belonging to the Prince of Condé, who had, throughout the wars, carefully kept it garrisoned, with the view of securing to himself a retreat from his enemies in case of being driven to extremities. But unfortunately, just before the battle of St. Denis, the garrison had been unavoidably withdrawn from Noyers, to defend a neighbouring castle belonging to John de Ferrieres, vidame of Chartres, which, after sustaining a protracted siege, at length fell into the hands of the Royalists, who left it a heap of ruins, making prisoners the Huguenots found within its walls.

The Prince of Condé, from the time of Noyers being abandoned by the cherished troops selected for its protection, had been seriously

uneasy concerning its probable fate if left much longer undefended, as his most valuable papers and effects were known to be secreted there. When he fled from Paris, he more than ever bitterly regretted not having ordered part of the force which lay at Rochelle, to reinforce his castle, after he had agreed to the peace at Chartres. The fear of exciting the jealousy of the other chiefs, whose property lay undefended, had alone withheld him, and he now hastened forward, not with the hope of finding safety in his favourite castle, but to secure what he most valued, and destroy his papers, before they could become the prey of his enemies. After they had taken some refreshment, he and Coligni, without delay, burnt every document that might have been of importance to the Royalists, and set all things in order, that they might quit Noyers by daybreak, to commence a perilous journey across the country to Rochelle. Fearing a surprise, they neither of them felt sufficiently satisfied to retire to rest: and Condé, with moody discontent, lay down fully armed upon a couch,

and for some time, without interruption from the patient Coligni, indulged in bitter invectives against Charles and the false party which surrounded him. At length he fell into a heavy slumber, and Coligni, retrimming the lamp, took from his pocket the small bible he always bore about him, and on his bended knees fed anew his hungry soul with the bread of life; refreshing his patience with the cup of hope, and the clear beams of faith. The Bible was still in his hand, and his fervent eyes were still raised to heaven, when it pleased his Almighty Father to try his truth and constancy yet more.—A horseman was suddenly heard in the dead of night galloping towards the castle, and soon the heavy tramp sounded in the court below. Coligni awoke the Prince; but before he could explain the cause of alarm, the Chevalier du Lancray rushed into the room. The truth burst in an instant upon Condé, who had in an unguarded moment named to Du Lancray before they fled from Paris, the place of their intended retreat. He started up, and laying his hand upon his sword, looked furiously at

Du Lancray, crying, "Curse upon thee, we are discovered!" Du Lancray retreated a few steps, saying, —"I tried to conceal your flight: do not blame me — you know what the queen is — and she herself questioned me."

"O wretched fool! could ye not be silent?"

"Impossible," replied Du Lancray: "she would have made you, yourself, explain all to her, if you had been there;—but there is no immediate danger; I have ridden furiously to get here before Victor d'Espernon, he is yet, many miles in the rear."

"Time has not destroyed more of what has been, than the tongue that which should have been," said Coligni; "but we have no leisure to recriminate or reflect; we must take instant thought for the morrow."

"True," observed Du Lancray, "what is done, is done; we must fly now."

"Fly," repeated Condé with a scornful laugh, "O, how could I trust him!"

"You may spare your tauntings, Prince; I said but little to the queen, I could have told

her much more: that you know. I could have told her more than a little."

"O, Du Lancray! did not I—did not all the Huguenots, in this instance particularly require of you silence? Why have you not learnt a wise silence? Would the men of old so long have worshipped idols, could they have spoken?"

"Come, my Lord," cried Coligni, interrupting him, "we must indeed tarry here no longer, or Victor d'Espernon and his light troops will be upon us."

"I will not move," said Condé; "it is vain to struggle against Providence."

"Do not abandon yourself to despair," exclaimed Coligni. "God will not forsake us — the waters of affliction will soon abate."

"Nay, Coligni, it is Heaven's will to oppress us,—our enemies abound, our camp is empty—all around is dark as a moonless night; let us lie down and sleep, being prepared for the hideous dream which will follow."

Coligni made no reply, but taking the prince by the arm, hurried him into the hall, and

whilst giving some necessary directions to an old domestic respecting their flight, Du Lancray distinguished in the distance the tramp of horsemen.—"It is Victor d'Espernon and his Switzers," he cried: "hide yourselves,—get beyond the castle; I will amuse him until you are out of reach; be quick, be quick!—they are upon us."

The Prince of Condé's courage revived as the danger of his situation became more apparent; and giving some hasty directions to keep the enemy employed without as long as possible, they left the castle by a secret passage; and after experiencing in the way many difficulties, and much inconvenience, at last arrived at the spot where they had appointed to wait for horses to carry them beyond the reach of their pursuers. Condé feared his servants would be prevented from obeying the last orders he had given them, to aid his and Coligni's escape, and with a hurried and unequal step paced to and fro the short space in front of the cavern. He often stopped and listened, but not

a living sound broke the tedious repose of the dewy night; and again folding his arms upon his breast, and sinking his head, his feverish mind became racked with confused and troubled thoughts. It was not for religion alone that the Prince of Condé unsheathed his sword: private feelings and revenge greatly clouded the nobleness of his mind, and ambition was the strong nerve which imparted energy to his actions. He was firmly attached to the reformed religion; but Catherine de Medicis and the Guises—not so much the errors of the Romish church—were the objects of his determined enmity: the former he justly considered the implacable enemy of his family, and the latter as the powerful rivals of his fame, ever usurping honours which should have been his. Whilst Condé was thus agitating himself by recalling the past in the midst of the dangers which beset the present, Coligni sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree, watching the heavy clouds as they slowly rolled over the bright and immoveable stars far beyond, with the tearful eye of hu-

manity and the mild joy of a Christian.—"The cares of life," he mentally exclaimed, "are like these dark clouds, often shrouding the resplendent beacons of faith and hope; but ever blessed be the holy name of *Him* who has made the ills of life, to those that trust in him, as evanescent as the fleeting clouds of heaven:—who has taught men to watch with patient hope for the shining forth of the bright star of mercy, which glows beneath each angry cloud,"—his meditations were rudely broken by the prince, who, suddenly stopping by him, whispered, "Do you hear aught?"

Coligni rose, and after listening attentively for several moments, exclaimed in a low voice, "I hear a confused sound which seems to approach,—it may be they are in quest of us, let us retreat."

They immediately retreated within the cavern, and anxiously awaited the drawing near of their friends or foes. After a few minutes of acute, breathless suspense, they distinctly heard the tramping of horses, and men's voices within a

few paces of their retreat:—and the next instant, a tall figure darkened the entrance to the cave, and in a low mysterious voice ejaculated "Peace!"—The Prince, believing it was Du Lancray, was on the point of replying, when Coligni seized him by the arm, whispering—"Stand close, Rochelle, was the word I gave."—Condé shrank back into a recess close by the opening; but the whisper had been partially heard, and on a signal being given, three men rushed in, and passing the fugitives, fired their muskets. The lofty cavern blazed for a moment with dazzling lights, revealing Coligni and the prince as they darted from it into the wood beyond, amidst the rebounding echo of the shot, and the oaths and imprecations of their baffled assailants.

"Hold by me," cried Condé, as he precipitated himself through the dark and trackless thicket; "we shall yet escape them."

"We are three leagues from the Loire," answered Coligni, already nearly breathless from exertion. The day was just breaking as they

fearfully emerged from the wood, and to their inexpressible and grateful joy, the first living being they beheld, was Du Lancray sleeping under a treee, and two horses grazing at a short distance from him.

"How came you here?" asked Coligni, awaking him, whilst the prince was busy in securing the horses.

"They heard me speak of sending to you at the cave, and got there before me; and I, hoping that you might have the good fortune to escape, have wandered for hours round this part of the wood, until I was faint from disappointment and fatigue."

Without pausing to reply, the harassed chiefs mounted in haste, and with the speed of the wind, galloped towards the Loire. As they gained the summit of a lofty hill, Condé checked for a moment his flying steed, to look back on the country he had left. Soldiers, fierce in pursuit, were scattered over his princely domain, and he faintly heard Victor d'Espernon shout, as he recognised in the flying warriors, the objects of

his search. They reached the precipitous banks of the wide and rapid Loire; and galloping along its shore, eagerly sought for a passage. Again and again Condé strove to force his charger down the rocky edge, but it was in vain, the noble beast shrank back with fear, and fled along the roaring stream.

"They are upon us!" cried Coligni; "make for yonder point, and force him in."

Condé obeyed, and with a sudden effort precipated himself and foaming horse into the river. Coligni followed, but the impetuous torrent bore them along upon its broad bosom far below the point on the opposite bank which would have afforded them a safe landing; in vain their bursting eyes roamed along the broken shores, in quest of an asylum; — a mark to the enemy, and half distracted with the dread of seeing Coligni sink beneath the waters, Condé, at length abandoned his horse, and seizing Coligni's by the rein, amidst the enemy's mingled shouts of admiration and rage, gained in safety the desired bank.

CHAPTER XXX.

In the camp at Rochelle, all was uncertainty and confusion: war had not been formally proclaimed, but the Huguenots, in expectation of a speedy renewal of hostilities, were flocking round their leaders from every quarter. Whilst some were eager to revenge the grievances and insults they had endured and received from the papal authorities, others were clamorous against the Black Knight, whom they accused of breaking the peace they were just beginning to enjoy. In the mean time, the knight remained secluded within his tent, apparently indifferent to all that was passing beyond, and the Prince of Condé and Coligni felt justly indignant at the contemptuous silence of a man whose violent and unexplained conduct had surrounded their lives

with so many dangers, and further irritated the malice of their enemies. The Huguenots were not kept long in ignorance of the intention of the papists: two days after the escape from Noyers, a messenger from the king arrived at Rochelle, demanding an immediate surrender of the Black Knight, and in case of a refusal, he was to proclaim war. A council was called in Condé's tent to decide upon the answer to be forthwith sent to Charles, and the Black Knight was summoned to attend to explain his conduct at Montreal. In reply to the summons, he pleaded that indisposition prevented his attendance at the council, and as he would not explain his motives, he declined all attempts to extenuate his actions.

"He takes coolly what will involve us in war, earlier than we thought," said Condé, as he tore the paper in pieces.

"Why should it be?" cried several voices at once; "give him up to the papists."

A bright colour rushed into the Prince of Condé's countenance, and some thought his eyes sparkled with approbation, rather than

indignation at the murmur around; but the Admiral Coligni, his countenance flushed with anger and astonishment, arose, and striking the table as he rose, cried, "Never! never! Shall the noble knight be sacrificed to your ingratitude? O ye ignoble spirits! Is it possible that you would give up to papal revenge, the hero who has so long and faithfully fought for the truth?"

"He has been brave, and faithful, we grant," observed the Marechal Guerchy, "but how long will he continue so?"

"Whilst he lives! —when I, Coligni, forsake the just cause of God and man, still *he* will be true."

"Aye, I also would answer for his fidelity," said D'Andelot, "but I dislike the pride which makes him live like an anchorite amongst thousands."

"His reserve may proceed from secret woe," replied Coligni; "if it be from pride, far be it from us, D'Andelot, to name his faults; rather

let us, whilst we sit in judgment upon his imprudence, call to remembrance his many active virtues. All can name the errors of this mysterious man, but who can number his deeds of valour, benevolence, and self-denial?"

"You are right," exclaimed Condé; "we must keep him; but give me to deal with the worst malice of a wise enemy, rather than the errors of a friend."

"It is better," observed D'Andelot, in an under tone of voice; "as revenge is more luscious than a forced forgiveness."

The Prince of Condé frowned, but made no reply; and after some further useless discussion, the council broke up, having determined upon accepting the challenge for war. The morning had not dawned, when Coligni wrapt his cloak about him, and leaving Condé's tent, proceeded to the solitary dwelling of the Black Knight, and for some time with deep feeling he stood regarding, by the feeble light of the moon, the waving banner by the tent, which betokened

the wrongs and firmness of its owner. Suppressing his emotion, he abruptly asked a sentinal if the knight had risen.

"He has not yet retired to rest, and is still in the outer tent," replied the soldier.

"It is well, my friend, you must admit me to him."

"Sir, it is impossible."

"I am the Admiral Coligni."

"I would die to serve you, General, but dare not disobey my captain."

"Go then, and tell him that it is *I* who wait."

The soldier hesitated, and then respectfully requesting Coligni to follow him, without an announcement conducted the general immediately into the presence of the Knight, who was half reclining upon a low couch close by a table, on which lay an open Bible. His eyes were closed, but he was evidently not sleeping, and arose, when Coligni entered, receiving him with a composed and distant air, which made the General feel that he was an unwelcome

guest, in the only tent of the camp which he now for the first time entered.

After a formal salutation on both sides, the Knight with great calmness said, "I know that I am abandoned by the Huguenots, nothing else would have brought you here at such an hour; but they shall not give me up—no—I will surrender myself to the Papists, of my own free will, and thus save your honour from reproach."

"Sir Knight, we have sent our answer to the King, and shall soon stand in need of your prowess."

"Am I to understand that I am free?"

"You are, from punishment: how far from blame, you yourself best know."

"My own mind is quite satisfied upon the subject," replied the Knight, with great coolness. "I cannot with any justice be accused of drawing the Huguenots into a war: I may have hastened it; that is all."

"And that is doing us mischief enough as we

are situated," replied Coligni; but my business with you at this hour is of a private nature. Are you disposed to attend to me?"

The Knight slightly bent his head; and Coligni taking from his breast the miniature of a young and lovely woman (who had been deeply beloved by him in early life), regarded it attentively for several moments, and then handed it to the Knight, saying, "Do you know that picture?"

The Knight took the miniature, and when his eye fell on it, the paleness of his lips revealed what his trembling tongue could not utter. Heaving a deep sigh, he laid his feverish hand upon Coligni's, and pressing the miniature to his lips, averted his head as he returned it to its owner.

"It cannot be," cried Coligni, with great agitation; "you are yet in the morning of life—it is not age which has planted those deep furrows in your brow; yet she is known and dear to you."

"Look at me well," said the Knight in deeply

affecting accents; "look at me, read in my features, that which I dare not breathe."

"It is a mystery," replied Coligni, looking alternately at the Knight and at the miniature; "all is yet to me a mystery."

"Listen," whispered the Knight: "my errand to Montreal Castle was to rescue Ann of Guienne's son from the dungeon and the grave of Henri l'Intrepide."

He rushed from the tent as he spoke, and Coligni, struggling with emotion, staggered into the open air, and raising his eyes to heaven ejaculated, "It is he! it is he!—O Henri, you have a stern avenger."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"And do you never feel doubtful and hopeless?" asked Raymond.

"Of an over-ruling Providence I can never doubt," replied Coligni, "therefore am always full of hope. No persecution or distress should tempt the Christian to infer that God has forsaken him. Were not the apostles the beloved of heaven? yet they, whilst on earth, were in poverty and distress, suffering persecution and reproach; the blessed saints were martyrs; and Christ our King had not where to rest his sacred head. O, ever praised be that God of mercy who gives his servants the happiness which draws no sustenance from aught below; who gives peace in the midst of tumults — joy in tribulation."

Raymond made no reply; his heart was too full of gratitude for utterance, and heaving a deep sigh, he arose and left the tent.

It was the eve of the fatal battle of Jarnac, and the spring-time of nature's magnificence and beauty. The new-born flowers, rich in fresh odours and blushing grace, glittered with the silver dew-drops of the glowing eve; the bursting foliage seemed more green and lovely than it ever had before; the purity, and silent, expressive joy of all around touched Raymond's heart with mingled and inexpressible emotion. "All Nature is perfect," he mentally ejaculated, "save man, the lord of all; he, like a lofty mount gilded by a departing sun, lives in shadowed majesty — here, bright spots, cheering like virtue's smile, stand forth, — close by lie broad shadows too dark to penetrate."

It was an awful night to many a thinking and a guilty soul. Coligni passed the hours in prayer, whilst Condé's fiery spirit could not seek repose, but, followed by D'Andelot and Montgomeri, he visited each post, and though an

enemy four times stronger lay in sight, talked of victory.

Many a bold spirit kept vigils in the royal camp. Victor d'Espernon on his knees before a crucifix, repeated again and again the penitential psalms. His was a soul torn with contending emotions — miserable in the bonds of sin, yet wanting energy to burst them, he felt a base conniver at another's wrongs, a partner in his father's dishonour, and trembled, knowing that there was an ever-seeing God.

"O why," he murmured, "did I yield to this cruel slavery? why did I not demand justice for the oppressed rather than become a partner with the oppressor? Then I might have done it; now I must tarry till the grave closes over my unhappy father. O vain imagination! no confession or absolution gives me the peace of innocence. The first budding of sin is like the serpent's egg, easy to crush, but who can wrestle with the full-grown serpent? Holy Michael defend me! though my guilt is hidden from the world, it is not from thee: O, all-powerful

saint! absolve me from my sin; stifle the voice I cannot silence, which for ever whispers to my trembling spirit, 'deeper woe shall be thine, when hereafter thou shalt look upon the body thou hast loved too well, and feel thyself an outcast from the living God.'"

The lamp of life, whose holy beams alone shed peace over the contrite soul, was shrouded from Victor's longing eyes by the black veil of superstition. His impotent prayers brought him no guide to lead him from the thorny path of sin; and left him ever oppressed with a bitter sense of his own, and his father's guilt, without hope for the future, or consolation for the present.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The royal army was nominally commanded by the Duke of Anjou, but the Marechal de Tavannes, a favourite and experienced general, was the friend Catherine placed near the prince, with the power to direct and advise his military movements; and Henry, with a wisdom above his years, attended to the well-digested counsel of his able instructor. — Long before the day broke, the Duke of Anjou, impatient to begin the battle he had anxiously anticipated for many days, let the principal detachment of his army cross the river, and when the morning dawned, the Huguenots were distressed and surprised, to find the enemy close upon them. But Tavannes, aware that the royal army was at least four times stronger than the Reformers', forebore to

commence an attack, at a time when success must indisputably have been his, and determined to wait until the Prince of Condé should himself give the signal for battle. Coligni had arranged his cavalry with admirable skill, and only paused to receive orders from Condé, when a trumpet of the royal guards rode up to the Count Montgomeri, as he stood by the Admiral Coligni, bearing a message from the Duc de Monsalez, craving a few minutes' audience, apart, before the engagement began.

Montgomeri felt a slight suspicion of treachery, and replied, — "Tell the duke, your master, that I will listen to him here."

"Sir," answered the soldier, "the Duke de Monsalez bid me urge, that he is an aged man, and your superior in rank; he cannot therefore, come to you."

Coligni, who saw that Montgomeri hesitated, whispered, — "Do not go; say that you will meet him, please God, after the battle."

"True, but then we may meet in eternity; he has wronged me, and I would forgive him now."

"Aye, but believe it, there is treachery," rejoined Coligni;—"remember Catherine de Medicis's son commands that army, and you slew his father."

Montgomeri started, but turning to the soldier, asked, "What is my security?"

"Le Duc de Monsalez's honour," was the reply.

"It is not enough," cried Montgomeri; "go, tell the Duc de Monsalez, we will parley in the battle."

The soldier wheeled his horse round, and pointing to a single horseman who was slowly approaching, said, "See, my lord, the venerable duke does not fear to come to you."

"Nor will I fear to meet him," cried Montgomeri, setting spurs to his charger, and galloping towards the duke.

"Alas!" exclaimed Coligni, "he has fallen into the snare;—see, Du Crow, a party of lancers have been detached from the army, and are approaching,—go quickly and watch them; give a signal when you need help."

The Marechal du Crow promptly obeyed, and with his eye fixed upon the lancers beyond, remained at a short distance behind his friend Montgomeri, who talked with Le Duc de Monsalez, of private wrongs, amidst the clamour of trumpets, and cries of men preparing for battle. Montgomeri, at length extended his hand to the duke, who pressed it to his heart, and each bidding the other an amicable farewell, they turned to join their respective ranks.

A tear glistened in Montgomeri's eye, as he joined Du Crow, saying, "The Duke de Monsalez, is my mother's brother, and is too much like her to be false; I am rejoiced I did not doubt him."

"The mind which is itself incapable of treachery," observed Du Crow, "should dread weakening its nobleness by suspicions, for —"

The sentence his generous soul had formed, was never completed, whilst he was yet speaking, in an instant, the lance intended for Montgomeri, cut wizzing through the air, and transfixed his friend in the middle of his spine,

uttering a shrill and piercing cry, (which thrilled as it rose distinct, and terrible, a note of anguish, free from the mingled sounds around,) he sprung from his frightened war-horse, hung quivering for a moment in the air, and then fell dead upon the ground.

Coligni beheld the foul murder, and heard the appalling death-cry, — dashing his spurs into his charger's sides, he gallopped along the ranks, giving the command for instant battle. Animated by the fire of his eye, and the stern wildness of his cry, the cavalry rushed upon the enemy with impetuous force, and were met with equal fury. The engagement soon became general, and for some time, notwithstanding the superiority of the Royalists in numbers, their ultimate success was doubtful. D'Andelot, at the risk of his life, resolved to revenge the murder of Du Crow, and in the very heat of the battle, he rode up to the Duc de Monsalez, who commanded a squadron of the Catholic horse, and discharging a pistol in his face, laid him dead upon the field. D'Andelot was instantly

attacked by the infuriated squadron, and was at length with difficulty rescued by the Prince of Condé, who, (although his leg had been broken by a kick from an unruly horse before the action commenced,) performed on that memorable day unexampled acts of bravery. Followed by Rochefoucault, he transpierced the thickest of the battle, and sustained the unequal fight, with a perseverance that defied and daunted the fiercest of his opposers. The Duke of Anjou, for a time lost in admiration, followed with his eye the intrepid prince as he firmly stood the fire, or boldly advanced to attack even the royal squadron, in which fought Oswald d'Espernon, who, as the battle thickened, was driven from his post near the Duke of Anjou, by the unconquerable Black Knight, who with merciless speed, pursued him from place to place. Thrice Oswald saw the waving banner of the terrible band close behind him, as he fled overpowered by new and irresistible feelings. The victim of despair, he rushed for protection amongst a body of Switzers, commanded by Victor, and

as his dreaded enemies wheeled off, he beheld near, Raymond de Moreau : he did not fly from him —with a loud laugh of hate he gallopped up to him; but the youth, recoiling with horror, turned away, and as he turned, met Victor. Reining in his charger, Raymond waved his sword over his head, crying, — "Come on! Edessa and honour be my war-cry!"

"And peace with you, be mine," cried Victor, as he rapidly led his troops on to the point he was ordered to occupy.

The Huguenots in spite of the heroic efforts made by the unequalled warriors who commanded them, were at length compelled on all sides to give way. Their thinned and exhausted troops could have no rest, or fresh supply of men, whilst they were attacked by a constant influx of assailants from the royal camp. Coligni, covered with blood and dust, continued to animate his men to the last. He was mainly supported by the Black Knight, who, in the general distress, displayed the undaunted resolution of his character, continuing to make vigor-

ous efforts to repulse the enemy, till overpowered by increasing numbers he was compelled to retreat. Coligni, at length, determined to give the signal for flight, when he was checked by dismay at seeing the Black Knight borne by his charger (mad with the anguish of a deadly wound) amongst the enemy. His faithful band rushed forward to the rescue. The struggle which ensued was long and deadly; hope, fear, fury, and despair, animated each party. The Black band were hewn to pieces, and fell in scattered numbers amongst the heaps of dead and dying, which told how dearly they had sold their lives. Coligni, in an agony of feeling, as he beheld the Knight's bleeding body carried by the enemy from the field, called upon Montgomeri to fly to Condé for instant help. "Only bear up until I return," cried the warrior, and dashing with irresistible force through the enemy he spurred along the borders of the river, till seeing a troop of Normans, headed by the Duke of Anjou, coming towards him, he paused for an instant, and then with dismay turned to retrace his

dangerous way. But he had been recognised and was chased. It was from twenty avenging foes that the proud Montgomeri fled : Catherine de Medicis' glaring hate, and the mild spectre of the brave king he unwittingly had slain appeared before him : he closed his eyes, and in deep horror called upon heaven for pity and for help. His pursuers gained upon the tired steps of his exhausted steed, and with a sudden effort of despair, Montgomeri drew his poniard from his belt, and plunging it into his breast, fell headlong upon the ground, amidst the disappointed and revengeful cry of his foes.

In the mean time, Raymond had been despatched on the other side to procure succour for Condé, but he returned alone to support the gallant Prince, who, scorning to fly, in stern silence maintained the unequal combat. Like a wounded lion of the desert, ignorant of fear and a stranger to superior power, he sprung upon and boldly attacked his angry foes. Loud along the plain echoed the shrill trumpets of retreat ; and the exulting notes of triumph rent

the air. Condé, facing his enemies, paused and listened; a bursting sigh tore his bosom, and yielding up his sword, faint, wounded and exhausted, he surrendered himself a prisoner to two officers of rank, St. Jean, and Tison d'Argence. At that moment, so full of bitterness to his soul, Montesquiou, captain of the king's guards, with a treachery for ever hateful, started forward, and taking a deliberate aim, discharged his pistol at the noble Condé's breast, exclaiming, "Die now!" A groan of horror burst from all around, and execrations from his own troop followed the recreant as he galloped off, bearing the news of his foul deed to the Duke of Anjou.

Raymond, half choked with grief, had the fainting Prince gently carried from the gory scene around him, and laid under the shade of a tree close by the peaceful Charente. His weary soul seemed ready to depart, yet lingering, convulsed his trembling frame with pangs known only to the dying: laying his hand upon his fluttering heart, he turned his dim eyes towards the bloody field, and tried in vain to speak:

the departing sun then shone forth, and threw his crimson beams upon the expiring hero's pale damp brow, — the evening breeze played with his golden hair, and yet fanned the lingering, fluttering, vital flame. The day-star sunk, and Condé closed his eyes for ever.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE was great horror in the scene; yet on he stalked, pale and haggard as the dead below him. The shafts of destruction no longer flew around, no longer the earth trembled with the bold cry of unconquerable resolution: but on the chill night-air, from the wild field of desolation, burst low moans of expiring anguish. Not a star cheered the heavy firmament; but over the sickening expanse of death, the waning moon threw her cold, uncertain, feeble beams. Coligni raised his eyes to heaven, and folding his arms upon his aching breast, slowly passed on. How many a gallant form was coldly stiff around him! How many a noble heart, still and lifeless! How much of hope, ambition, fire, and zeal lay quenched in gore!

The Christian soldier shed tears of deep agony, but despair did not embitter his cup of sorrow; and sinking to the earth, his heavy soul fell prostrate at the Throne of Grace, supplicating for strength to bear with meek resignation the weight of woe that it had pleased heaven to lay upon it. Whilst he yet prayed, with the fervor of a troubled, helpless spirit, close by the peaceful river, the moon emerged from a thick cloud, and fell upon the slightly heaving body of a warrior, which lay just before him.—Coligni started up, and bending over the insensible form with difficulty, half raised it, and lifting the visor, beheld the pale and fixed features of the Count Montgomeri; uttering an exclamation of gratitude to heaven, Coligni, without an instant's delay, hastened for assistance. The first person he met was Raymond, who, ignorant of the Black Knight's capture, was searching for him among the dead. Coligni, with breathless haste, called him from a heap of slain, and leading him to the spot where Montgomeri lay, they together bore him unmo-

lested to a miserable hut, close by the Castle of Jarnac, where Henry duke of Anjou triumphed with savage joy over the cold remains of the once intrepid Prince of Condé. The Count Montgomeri was at length, to the inexpressible happiness of those about him, partially recovered. Heaving a deep sigh, he threw a wild, unsteady, reproachful look on his restorers to a fearful and a stormy life, as if his half-waking soul longed again for unbroken repose, foreseeing the horrors which awaited its frail body, before it again tasted forgetfulness. The predominating feeling of all around him was joy, and they addressed him in cheering accents; but, pale and disconsolate, Montgomeri closed his eyes, and, shuddering, turned his head away.

Coligni, with the broken remains of his cavalry, retreated to Rochelle, and there met Jane d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, who joined in the universal cry of the reformers to declare Coligni the head of the Huguenots, in the room of Louis Prince of Condé: the young King of Navarre, who now joined the party, being too young for

so arduous and important a trust. In the mean time, the news of the victory at Jarnac, and the death of Condé, had been received by Catherine de Medicis with unbounded joy. She caused an announcement of the victory to be sent to the sovereign princes of Europe, and public rejoicings to be made throughout the kingdom. The Romanists had truly lost a formidable enemy in Condé, and the Huguenots soon after had again to mourn for the loss of another bold champion of their rights, in the death of D'Andelot, the renowned brother of the Admiral Coligni, who fell a victim, shortly after the battle of Jarnac, to a malignant fever at the city of Saintes, which anxiety of mind, and exhaustion from his wounds had not left him strength to resist. He died deservedly regretted; and it is said that Henry of Navarre first felt the glow of that heroic spirit, which in after-times rendered him so celebrated, at the time when the actions of the intrepid D'Andelot were the general theme of admiration. The absence too, of the Black Knight, whose fate was totally unknown,

caused great uneasiness, and left a blank in the Huguenot army not to be filled. To Raymond de Moreau it was a distressing event; and although Coligni offered him a distinguished post in his reviving army, he was too spiritless and wretched to accept it; and anxious to remove the miserable uncertainty concerning the destiny of those most dear to him, he entreated Coligni to privately grant him permission to be absent for a short time, in order to discover, if possible, what was become of his friend.—Coligni withstood all his earnest solicitations, foreseeing the certain danger which would await him, if discovered among his enemies. But Raymond would listen to no argument touching his own safety: his mind was in a most irritable state; for, added to his feelings for his country, the fatal termination of the late battle had overthrown all his fond hopes of private happiness. From the time of his deliverance from the dungeon of Montreal, he had heard nothing of Edessa: still she existed the sun of his life, and during the long winter evenings which

intervened between the breaking of the peace of Chartres, and the subsequent battle, he had often recounted to the Black Knight (who listened with deep and sad interest) the history of his love: — thus feeding the flame which preyed upon his vitals: but the hope of soon finding the spot that held all he valued upon earth, was blasted by the unfortunate defeat at Jarnac, and the consequent danger to himself of leaving the protection of his friends. At last, almost weary of life, he determined to escape from the camp, if he failed in his last attempt to gain permission to leave it. But Coligni spared him the pain of a step which would have been in him (bound as he was by the sacred ties of friendship to his general) most disgraceful; and yielding to his energetic and moving appeal, the admiral embraced him tenderly, bidding him farewell, and at all times to trust in the righteous protection of Heaven.

That same night Raymond, disguised as a Spanish monk, left the Huguenot camp and commenced his perilous journey to Paris. Fully

alive to the dreadful fate which would be inevitably his, if he again fell into the power of his vigilant and irreconcilable enemies, he cautiously maintained the peaceful character he had assumed, and with profound and heartfelt humiliation bent before every crucifix and shrine on his tedious way. Depressed as his mind was with a sense of his own, and his countrymen's state of desolation, it was not to be wondered at, that he mistook for vital devotion the earnest prayers he offered at the foot of the cross; but he, in common with most of the Huguenots, had yet to learn that christianity required them to forgive their enemies.

During these unhappy struggles, the reformers had no regular form of prayer, and no place which they could look upon as especially sacred to the great Captain of their faith, "where two or three might assemble in his holy name and feel that he was there amongst them." The consequences were inimical to the pure religion they professed; for although they had rent the veil of superstition, and discovered, with shrinking

horror, the enormities within; still the mass of the reformers were deficient of the many Christian graces, which are fed and kept active by an habitual withdrawing from the world and the exercise of spiritual gifts at appointed times and seasons. Raymond felt this, for he frequently witnessed, and many times experienced in his assumed character, contemptuous and even cruel treatment from the Huguenots, whenever they dared exercise their power upon the Catholics; and he often turned with disgust from the intolerant and persecuting spirit which showed itself in those from whom he expected better things—from the very people who in every treaty deprecated the cruelty and intolerance of the church of Rome. But the Huguenots of this sad period were examples only of constancy to their posterity: hardened by the stern evils they were forced to endure, hardships had made them harsh, and constant deception had rendered them suspicious, and, too often, unrelenting;—branded as monsters in the sight of God—driven from their once cheerful homes—struggling with

undeserved poverty — loaded with insult, scorn, and hate—who can marvel (remembering they were but men), that their wretched hearts gave bitter things for bitter?

As Raymond approached the city, from which, many years before, he had been dragged a helpless prisoner, his bosom throbbed anew with doubt, and indignation. Pausing on La Belle Colline, he looked down upon the grey monastery of St. Augustin, and with stern delight, tortured his memory by recalling every incident which had last befallen him within its perfidious walls. Edessa's wild cry of despair seemed still to echo in his ears,—and starting up, he hurried on his way. As he entered Paris, with a rapid step, and disordered air, the cry, of "The queen! the queen!" restored him to recollection, and stepping on one side, close by the Palais de Justice, he waited Catherine's approach. The royal party were on their return from a grand hunt, which concluded the festivities in honour of the late victory. The king was not of the party, but acclamations of joy rent the air, as

Catherine entered the city. She rode a high Arabian horse, and her white plumes waved far above the heads of the courtly throng which environed her. The newly appointed chancellor, John de Morvilliers, Bishop of Orleans, rode at her right; whilst on her left hand, the gay and laughing Henry, Duke of Anjou, by his lively sallies, occupied her chief attention. She looked upon the throng with a pleased interest; her expressive countenance beaming with a thousand graces, a bewitching smile played round her mouth; whilst her brilliant eyes seemed bent with thoughtful love upon her people. The soft inquiring look was irresistible, — every heart beat with admiration, — her ambition, her crimes, were forgotten, and the ensnared spectators loaded her with caresses and blessings, which should have called from her guilty heart the crimson blush of shame.

"The Huguenots have scandalized her," mentally, exclaimed Raymond; "she cannot be the demon they represent."

Catherine passed on, and his attention was

drawn to the princesses, Margaret and Claude, who immediately followed the queen. The young Duke of Guise rode close by the princess Margaret: wrapped in admiration of her beauty, every other object was lost to him; he saw only her, and felt that he was near her. Raymond sighed as he gazed on his devotion, and marked the pleased and gentle attention Margaret gave to her lover. The Princess Claude threw back her haughty head, and glancing with scorn at Margaret and Guise, (as from the narrowness of the way they took the precedence of her in the procession,) turned, and waving her hand, smiled upon the people, pleased at the admiration she excited. Suddenly her quick eye fell upon Raymond; she checked her horse for a moment, and beckoning to a courtier, who in an instant was by her side, laughingly exclaimed,—"Look, my lord, did you ever see eyes so bright beneath a cowl?"

Victor d'Espernon turned his eyes to where the Princess directed, and coloured deeply at the fiery and haughty look which was fixed upon him. Whether indignant at the boldness,

or that he recognized his daring rival beneath a monk's hood, was then uncertain; but darting at him a glance of ineffable hate, Victor followed the thoughtless Claude, whilst Raymond (trembling with passion), hurried to la Maison de Renhault. There new troubles awaited him; the house which had been his home, was inhabited by Henri d'Amville, the late constable Montmorenci's second son, and was so altered that he was some time in identifying it. He inquired for the Marquis de Louvois.

"He has been dead these two years," was the reply. Raymond turned deadly pale, but stifling his emotion, asked for father Anthony, and learnt with mingled feelings of regret and joy, that he had, a few weeks before, renounced the Papal faith, and fled to England; but of Edessa he could learn no tidings; no one could tell him where she was, or under whose protection she had been placed at the death of her father. Raymond, half distracted, visited every monastery in and near Paris; frequented every place of public resort; and remained for days

stationed near the palace, watching every one who went to or from the Louvre; but all was in vain; she was not to be seen amongst the grave or the gay, and Raymond, after continuing for weeks his hopeless search at Paris, with a broken heart left it, and travelled on, he knew not where, until late one evening he found himself within the gates of Rheims. There, too, every thing served to remind him of Edessa, and the happy days which were gone. The following morning he prepared to leave the city, and proceed on his solitary way, totally indifferent to the grandeur of that place, which in happier times had so often charmed his senses. As he passed the Cathedral, the tones of the organ arrested his steps, and thinking at that moment of Mary Stuart more than of Edessa, he entered the sacred building. His heart was full, to bursting, and slowly walking up the vaulted aisle, he approached the altar and sinking on his knees, buried his face in his hands and remained absorbed in bitter thought, until he was warned to stand out of the way of the

procession. He did not ask what procession, but retiring a little way back in the crowd, waited he knew not why. In a few moments the organ pealed forth its grand inspiring sounds, and the sun bursting from behind a cloud, gleamed through the richly stained glass, throwing his broad beams over the lofty pointed roof, and checkering the massive columns with his glorious light. The door by the glittering altar was thrown open, and the Archbishop of Rheims, followed by the Lady Abbess of St. Peter's, a a long train of nuns, and a novice clothed in dazzling white robes, slowly advanced. Falling prostrate before the host, the novice listened with motionless awe to the solemn prayers which preceded her taking the vow to leave the world. When the impressive dedicatory prayers were ended, the organ again in thrilling tones roused each weary thought, and whilst its solemn melody trembled through the aisles, the pale victim of superstition arose from her knees, and was conducted by a priest in front of the altar. She crossed herself, and bending in an

attitude expressive of the desolateness of her spirit, prepared to pronounce her vows. — The Lady Abbess advanced, and removed the veil. The nun did not raise her head, and her dark hair shaded her motionless features, whilst in low and tremulous tones she faultered out her irrevocable vows. The last words yet trembled on her tongue, — when a loud and piercing cry rang through the building, fearfully re-echoing along its many vaulted aisles. The nun started, and thrusting back her dishevelled hair, looked wildly around; — the voice she knew, — none but he, could *then* express such agony, their eyes met for one moment, — his look of anguish pierced her soul; she stood transfixed; her eyes brilliant with awakened misery, fixed upon the portal from which he had been thrust. A vivid colour burnt on either cheek, and her pale lips trembled; but they led her again to the altar, and made her tongue articulate her Saviour's holy name: she did not hear the solemn words she breathed, — alas! her wretched mind was busy in the world.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The first person Raymond saw, when he recovered his senses in the cloister of the Cathedral, was Victor d'Espernon, pale and agitated, bending over him; the sight of his rival restored, in an instant, the unhappy Raymond to vigorous life and recollection. Starting up, he cried, "Surely there is a curse upon me, that you of all earthly demons should be near me now."

Victor trembled, but with a strong effort commanding himself, he laid his hand heavily on Raymond's arm, and in a subdued and half-imploring voice, whispered, "She is dead to us! O then let us bury with her our resentment."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Raymond, throwing back his head, and striking his breast with convulsive violence,—"Shall the grave of her happiness

bury my resentment? Can I forget the agony which shook her frame? Avaunt! let me pass on."

"Raymond de Moreau, I can hear your cruel taunts, and forgive them: but listen to me; your life is in danger: fly before your heresy is known."

"I will not fly," cried Raymond, glaring wildly at him. "Aye, go and tell the merciless inquisitors that I, a sworn Huguenot, am here."

"Peace," whispered Victor, attempting to draw him beyond the hearing of persons who stood at a short distance from them; "peace; if you value your life, be silent."

"You have robbed me of all that is valuable in life — you have murdered my happiness for ever! and what is worse," he cried, in broken accents, clasping his hands with uncontroulable anguish, "you have blighted hers! O holy Michael! what a look was the last!"

Victor passed his hand across his brow, and heaving a deep sigh, said, "She has chosen the better part, and will be happy."

"I must see her," muttered Raymond, in his frenzy not heeding the presence of Victor, — "I must see her, and hear from her own lips if she be at peace,—if she bends to persecution, or is the willing victim of a base, and hell-taught church."

Victor sprang back, uttering a cry of horror. Crossing himself, he exclaimed, "O righteous Peter, forgive this daring blasphemy!" Then looking at Raymond with a strong expression of anger and detestation, he continued, "Your foul impiety has sealed your doom on earth, not my just indignation: you could not have moved me to betray you; the damning sin of your own heart has done it."

"Aye," cried Raymond, restored to some degree of composure by Victor's vehemence. "If hatred to the crying sins, and secret vices of the church of Rome be heresy, then am I a strong determined heretic: do your worst; take my life, and at last, my *kinsman*, befriend me!"

Victor turned pale, and starting back, cried, "My kinsman, didst thou say?"

"Aye, Victor d'Espernon, I know your dishonour, and despise you."

"If it be so, one of us must perish. Dishonour, did you say? Call it crime, perfidy, vileness. It is too much to bear: one of us must perish."

He darted away as he spoke, and Raymond, startled by his remorseful agony, felt instantly his feelings of enmity softened towards him: but quickly throwing off every thought of Victor, he remained thinking how he could contrive to obtain an interview with Edessa by the means of Renée of Lorraine, (who was the Lady Abbess of St. Peter's, and had always distinguished him when he had been the page of her niece Mary of Scotland, during the years she passed at Rheims before quitting France,) until his plans and meditations were interrupted by the entrance of two jailors of the episcopal dungeons at Rheims, who, placing their staves across his way, told him he was their prisoner. Raymond at once, seeing the utter uselessness of resistance, silently gave up his liberty. He was led through the rich

and varied gardens of the archbishop's palace, as if it were only to fill his mind with a longing sense of nature's sweetest treasures, before he was robbed of their every trace and freshness. He had enough of wretchedness to fill his soul, yet he paused, lingering over the blooming flowers, which loaded the air with odours and glowed beneath the noontide sun, as if he thought of nothing deeper. When the harsh bolt was drawn, and the low iron-studded door of the dungeon stood gaping, ready to admit him once more into the region of loathsome darkness, he shuddered, and closing his eyes, entered the gloomy abode. The fœtid dampness chilled him with sensations he but too well knew. Throwing himself upon the ground, he fell into a state of insensibility, which was succeeded by a gentle sleep that lasted many hours, long enough to refresh his wasted frame, and restore much of calmness to his mind. When he awoke, he, for some time, imagined himself in the dungeon at Montreal, totally forgetting all that had since intervened to add new bitterness to his prison thoughts ;—

nor was he entirely restored to a consciousness of his actual situation, until startled by low breathing sounds which proceeded from the farther extremity of the dungeon. Half rising, his brain felt on fire, as memory slowly revived, and his bursting eyes fell upon a tall figure stretched in profound sleep upon the bare ground. Instantly recognising by the shadowy light the pale and majestic features of the lost Knight, Raymond darted towards him, and eagerly awaking him, fell upon his breast in a transport of mingled joy and sorrow. When the first ebullition of feeling had subsided, they recounted, in turn, the disastrous events which preceded their becoming prisoners to their worst enemies; and the Knight concluded his narration by expressing his gratitude to Heaven for appointing to them the same dungeon, where they could mutually offer and receive consolation, worshipping the merciful Ruler of the world. "We cannot despond," he continued, addressing Raymond, "whilst we feel solely dependent upon a just Providence; and let us remember, my brother, that a true Christian's

character is best known amidst the storms of adversity. The mind's noblest light shines with he clearest lustre when the sun of its earthly prosperity is darkened."

"Stop!" cried Raymond, "do not console me now; I cannot bear words of comfort; you do not know a grief like mine: you never knew my Edessa! O, every virtue's richest gem adorns her precious soul; but she is lost to me! No more shall I listen to her words, or drink the echo of her voice. My keen sorrows have lost their bright star of consolation; my heart is a void, a horrid dungeon. O Edessa! why, why have you abandoned me!"

The day had departed, and night had long wrapped the prisoners in the deepest gloom, before Raymond's wearied spirit felt ready to sink into repose. Suddenly it was roused by the chiming of a monastery bell, which tolled the hour of midnight—and how much more to him! The distant sounds smote heavily upon his heart: bending forward, he held in his breath, and felt as though he was listening to Edessa's passing-bell.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE monastery bell had tolled the midnight hour, but Edessa did not seek repose. Holding a small ebony crucifix in her hand, she sat motionless and alone in her cell, — no sigh escaped her breast, — there was no tear glistening in her eye; but her hollow countenance expressed the faintness of a soul, wearied with depressing thought. The door was slowly opened, and Fulpa, habited as a nun of the order of St. Cloud, entered. Edessa slowly raised her head, and for a moment looked at her, but absorbed in heavy meditations, she was dead to outward impressions, and again sunk her head upon her hand.

Fulda was affected by her silent grief, and gently touching her on the shoulder, said in rousing accents, "Why are you, Edessa de

Breteuil, here? Are not you the betrothed of Raymond de Moreau?"

"Do you come to reproach me?" asked Edessa, shrinking from her touch.

"No, maiden! I have sought you in your most mournful hour to comfort your soul, for well I know that ye have not, in truth, resigned the world, and placed your trust in the rock of ages. — This day you have mocked your Saviour."

"I know it," whispered Edessa, in low uncertain accents; "for my spirit sees only darkness. Leave me, leave me to myself."

"Wretched maiden! lift up your thoughts to the living God, and light will shine upon the darkness; faith and hope will drive away despair."

"I cannot," replied Edessa; "my throbbing heart will not calmly hope. I pray, — yet anxiety lives in my breast, — grief hangs heavy on my soul; it is in vain that I humble myself before the cross, — all is in vain. Wearied of the manifold disappointments of sin, I have fled to my God, but I find no comfort. O Fulda!

do not reproach me; I know that mine is a thankless and rebellious spirit; fearing the wrath of heaven, in my misery I pant for true piety,— the dawn of eternal day."

"O my child! I would warn, but dare not reproach; I would warn you of the torture of being a spirit, and alone."

"That torture is already mine," cried Edessa. "From the world I have fled, and am shut out from heaven. — O! who can tell the loneliness of my spirit? Without guide or hope, I bound into the awful eternity, and wander on the brink of hell, amid the silent spirits of unfaithful men, — and, O horrible!" she sunk her voice to a scarcely audible whisper, as she continued; "it is there, that I and Raymond meet."

"Awake, awake your stubborn heart, wrapt in its own miseries," cried Fulda; "will nothing teach you that God is good, and merciful? Look at me, Edessa, and read on my brow the traces of past misery.— Aye, I can well remember when I turned from the world as one who had laid his last loved one in the grave,

yet for those hours of sorrow, O how deep is my gratitude! They taught me truly to pray, until the gates of heaven were pierced by my cries for help. Listen to me," continued Fulda, lowering her voice, and drawing from beneath the ample folds of her dress, a small bible, — "God sent to me, by the hands of a faithful servant, this precious gift; it is my life, my joy: it has made me, a houseless wanderer, happy, — my body knows no care, my soul has found a home."

Edessa fell upon her knees, and clasping her hands, whispered, "I will hide it! give to me this blessed book."

"Take it, my child," said Fulda, with deep feeling, bending over her, "and study it with prayer; and may it be to you a guiding star, leading your thoughts from earth to heaven; and now, Edessa, farewell! my part is done: we may not meet for many a long day, — but though earthly things be given to change, be sure of my affection; for the glorious example I take, is the unalterable God."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE battle of Jarnac, which swept from the face of the earth so many champions of the reformed religion, acted with salutary force upon many a brave spirit, left to sustain with fortitude the misfortunes which yet awaited the noble cause. The intrepid Coligni was still the faithful chief, diffusing into the minds of all about him, amidst the severest sufferings, a calm, unflinching confidence in the omniscience of Heaven. Less than a week after Raymond had left the Huguenots at Rochelle, they were inspirited by the arrival of a large body of Germans, commanded by the Count Mansfeldt. This unlooked-for reinforcement animated the soldiers with new ardour, and Coligni once more prepared to face the Duke of Anjou, who

had sworn to return triumphant to Paris, over a rebellion so many able generals had been unable to crush. But the celebrated skirmish of La Roche Abeille taught the young commander to be less confident of success: the Huguenots were decidedly victorious, and Montgomeri, seizing the opportunity when his troops were elated with the advantage they had gained, led a detachment through the province of Bearn, reducing in his way the inhabitants to obedience, and boldly carried his successes beyond the borders of Languedoc, whilst Coligni, with the remainder of the army advanced to the siege of Poitiers. The Duke of Guise, who had only a few days before joined the royal army, gaining intelligence of Coligni's design, hastily threw himself into the town, resolving to offer a determined resistance. He watched from the highest turret of the castle, the approach of the Huguenots, and his fiery eye roved from troop to troop, until it singled out the object of his unsatisfied vengeance. Turning to his friend, Du Monte, he sternly pointed out to him the

veteran, Coligni, as he, unconscious of the evil eye bent in hate upon him, arranged his army round the town. The siege proved tedious and unsatisfactory to both parties. Guise obstinately maintained his post: although the garrison was reduced to the last extremity, he resolved to hold out in spite of every loss and disadvantage, — and Coligni, who had little expected so formidable a resistance, was at length alarmed by the intelligence of the approach of the Duke of Anjou, who had advanced with the main army, as far as Chatellerand, a town belonging to the Huguenots. Aware that Chatellerand could not long hold out against the Royalists, Coligni was compelled to retire from Poitiers, after having lost two thousand men in attempting its reduction. Both armies were for some time occupied with trifling losses and successes, until they once more met to contend for victory, with desperate energy, on the plains of Moncontour. This nearly decisive battle commenced at sun-rise, on the third of October, 1569, and lasted little more than three hours. The Catholics were victorious, and the Hugue-

nots flying in every direction, were pursued with remorseless rage, until sunset. Coligni was the last who sheathed his sword, — his voice inaudible from pain and exhaustion, — his helmet and gorget filled with blood, which continued to flow from his wound in streams over his armour, rendering him a ghastly spectacle to friend and foe. At length retiring from the field, accompanied by the Princes of Bearn and Condé, and three hundred cavalry, he retreated to Parthenai, a small town seven leagues beyond Moncontour. At night he was joined by the Count of Nassau, and the brave German commander, Count Mansfeldt, who with three thousand men, had effectually prevented the further pursuit of the Royalists. Coligni's mind was not to be shaken by these disastrous events. Adversity he had long known ; but an ever constant faith in Providence enabled him to rise above its too often baneful influence. That same night, collected, and firm to his purpose, he summoned a council of his chief officers, and although unable to articulate from the anguish of his wound,

he forwarded despatches to England and Germany, announcing his defeat, and imploring immediate succour; and the following day retiring to Saintonge, he once more erected his standard, and meditated what course next to pursue.

Henry duke of Anjou, who had conducted himself with extraordinary intrepidity at Moncontour, neglected to follow up his victory as he might have done, and immediately undertook the siege of St. John d'Angeli, by which he gave the Huguenots time to rally and become at last, in spite of every depressing circumstance, really formidable to their unrelenting enemies. More than two months elapsing before D'Angeli capitulated, left Coligni at liberty to assemble his forces, and clearly ascertain their strength. Perceiving that he had little to hope for by remaining stationary, he began the famous march through the provinces, which exalted his fame for military skill beyond all precedent in modern warfare. Every obstacle in nature and

in art rose to impede his progress; the weather was intensely cold; mighty rivers intersected his way; the generals of the royal army every where offered him opposition; and he was almost utterly destitute of money and of stores. Yet his strong genius defied, and eventually conquered every danger. Early in the ensuing spring, he led a victorious army into Languedoc, bearing with them the spoils of the provinces they had left; from thence marching on to Burgundy, he gained, in the very heart of France a complete victory over the dispirited Catholics.

Charles, who could ill endure these alarming successes of the Huguenots, determined on taking the command of his army, and revenge in person the defeat of Arnay-le-Duc. Catherine dreaded this step, foreseeing that it would render Charles, if successful, absolute in his kingdom; and, at the same time, clearly perceiving that open force would never extirpate the Huguenots, and confident in her own deeply laid and secret plot, she forced Charles to enter

into a negociation with Coligni to secure his confidence, and a timely rest for the groaning state. These overtures were received with attention by the Huguenots, and after a short delay, a peace highly advantageous to the Reformers was proclaimed. Catherine de Medicis, in this affair, stept forward the seeming messenger of good, and to place beyond all doubt the sincerity of the interest she professed for the Huguenots, she proposed, to unite herself inseparably with them, by a marriage between her daughter Margaret of Valois, and the young Henry Prince of Bearn. The Huguenots long hesitated how far to trust these offers of inviolate amity, and for some time cautiously kept aloof. They were, however, by degrees softened into confidence by Charles's often-repeated and flattering invitations, begging them to repair to his Court, from which, he observed, they had been too long absent. The Admiral Coligni was immediately loaded with honours, and presents; the King addressed him by the affectionate and re-

spectful title of Father, shewing him upon all occasions a marked preference. Every suspicion was thus lulled, and France felt the repose which she had long sighed for.

Coligni's constant inquiries concerning Raymond de Moreau and the Black Knight, were alike fruitless. Charles and Catherine both affected to know nothing of their fate.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Castle of Montreal, the residence of Oswald, Marquis d'Ostun, was an ancient building standing on the borders of Normandy, and had been, in the freshness of its grandeur, the chosen residence of the unfortunate Charles Duke of Lorraine, the last of the Carlovingian race. There, he had wasted the time which should have been actively employed, in useless counselling with Herbert Count of Troyes, William duke of Guienne, and other nobles attached to the memory of Charlemagne and his descendants; whilst the diadem of his nephew, the feeble Lewis, was solemnly placed upon the prudent brows of the intriguing Hugh Capet, the active Duke of France. In the year 1445 Charles the Seventh bought the noble castle de

Montreal with its surrounding lands, from the Duchy of Normandy, and bestowed it, with the title of Marquis, upon his faithful adviser and friend, Raymond d'Espernon, who was descended from Constance, the mother of Prince Arthur of England (nephew to the usurper John) by her second husband Guy of Tours. The rich gift of royalty was never more worthily bestowed, and it descended peaceably from father to son, until 1541, when the Marquis d'Henri, surnamed the Intrepid, suddenly disappeared from the castle, taking with him his eldest son Ferrand, and leaving his wife, Ann of Guienne, with an infant son, totally ignorant of the cause of his flight. Months passed away, without affording the slightest information to the half-distracted Marquise, concerning her husband and son; and Henri's younger brother, Oswald, after having sought in every direction for the fugitives, apparently full of grief, repaired to Paris to seek an audience of the King. Francis the First, the reigning monarch, was generously affected at the unaccountable absence of the Marquis d'Ostun,

who from his many gallant virtues had been his distinguished favourite. Francis received Oswald in his armoury, where he was engaged in examining a sword and lance, studded with jewels, which had been sent to him by Henry the Eighth of England. He laid down the sword, but still held the lance in his hand, as he regarded Oswald with a look of deep interest, and abruptly asked if there were any tidings of L'Intrepide. — Oswald, did not reply, but bent on one knee before the King, and asked if his majesty would hear with patience that which he feared to reveal.

"Rise, my friend," cried the monarch. "I am no father confessor: those who speak to Francis address one who has many grievous faults, and need practise clemency as he hopes for it: speak boldly."

Oswald arose, and retreating a few paces, placed his hand before his face, and in a scarcely audible voice, said, "Sire, I am come to proclaim my brother, the Marquis d'Ostun, a traitor to his king and country."

"What!" cried Francis, "the gallant Henri l'Intrepide a traitor?"

"Listen, most gracious liege, and judge. It was the Marquis d'Ostun who first counselled Bourbon to turn rebel, and scorn the proffered love of your royal mother. At the siege of Pavia, when the enemy's garrison were reduced to the last extremity, and in a few hours must have surrendered, it was Henri l'Intrepide's secret intelligence that brought Bourbon and his Germans upon us.—Stay, my liege, yet listen! Who whispered Alençon and his troops to desert their sovereign? Who pointed out the spot where Lannoy could surround and make prisoner the bravest monarch in Christendom?"

Uttering a cry of rage, Francis sprung back, and in his frenzy of passion flung the lance he held with tremendous violence from him; it rebounded, and touching his hair as it passed over his head, struck against a buckler on the wall behind the exasperated King, and fell in shivers at his feet. Spurning the glittering fragments with his foot, in a hoarse voice, he commanded Oswald to continue.

Exulting in the effect of this treachery, Oswald with apparent reluctance obeyed, saying, "I will add one crime to those already told. His son Ferrand, although but a boy of twelve years old, is a very lion for boldness: by his father's orders, he bore from Paris intelligence to the governor of the Milanese, the Marquis del Guasto, when the agents of France would return from the Ottoman Porte. Their fate, thou knowest, sire, the Emperor Charles fatally and quickly determined."

"Stop!" cried Francis. — "Villain, thou liest! Henri d'Espernon, the noble, the free companion of my battles, the chosen friend of my peace is belied. Perfidious monster! you have stung his honour, and wounded mine. I sought Lannoy at Pavia, not he me. It was fate, not treachery that made me prisoner. It was the devil who told my detested rival where to waylay my messengers. Basest of the base! where is L'Intrepide?"

"Aye," replied Oswald, pale with fear and suppressed rage. "Where is he? why has he

fled at the time when Francis swears to revenge his murdered agents at Milan!"

Muttering low and deep curses, Francis stalked out of the armoury, leaving Oswald ignorant of the impression his story had made, and half wild with fear lest the enraged monarch should let the weight of his ire fall upon him: but he was not kept long in suspense. The following morning a paper was read at Paris, and forwarded to every town in France, summoning Henri Marquis d'Ostun to appear within a month before the parliament at Paris. His friends and his wife waited his coming with impatience, well knowing that he could clear himself of the charges brought against him. The last day arrived; but with it no tidings of the Marquis or his boy. He was forthwith proclaimed a traitor, his estates were confiscated, and then given by Francis to Oswald.

The wretched Marquise, Ann of Guienne, fled for comfort and protection with her infant to her near kinswoman Louise de Breteuil, wife to the Marquis de Louvois, and soon after dying

left Raymond to the care of the Marquis, who, fearing his haughty spirit as he grew up, concealed from him his birth, and his wrongs; but Fulda, who had attended the unhappy Ann in her last moments, vowing not to rest until she had discovered the real fate of the Marquis and Ferrand, received from Ann a letter to be given to Raymond, when he should leave the protection of De Louvois, and a ring which would when seen excite an emotion in either her husband or son, by which she could identify them. Fulda from that period became a ceaseless wanderer. Years passed away, and the memory of the unfortunate Marquis d'Ostun was fading from the minds of his friends, and Fulda began to fear that all hope of ever ascertaining his fate was at an end, when, long after Raymond's mysterious disappearance, the fame of the Black Knight roused her attention. Hastening to the Huguenot camp, just after the treaty of Chartres, she obtained an interview with the Knight, and showing the ring she had received from the dying marquise, marked his strange emotion when he re-

ceived it, and heard him declare himself Ferrand d'Espernon (who had made his escape the day after his father's death from the very dungeon afterwards assigned by the remorseless Oswald to Raymond).

The persevering zeal of the Huguenots at length discovered that their bold champion (whom we must for the present continue to designate the Black Knight,) was confined in a dungeon at Rheims; as he was a prisoner of war, the court could offer no opposition to his instant liberation, and as the reformers were no longer regarded, professedly, as heretics, Raymond was also declared free. They immediately proceeded to Paris, where they were greeted with the warmest welcome by the Huguenots, who appeared anxious to drive from their minds every suspicion of Catherine's treachery, (who would have sacrificed them, had she dared, whilst they were confined in the loathsome prison, where they were detained by her secret orders long after peace had been proclaimed.) The very day after he knight's arrival at Paris, he presented himself

at the court, and in the presence of the assembled nobles, announced to the king his rank and claims, begging that his cause might be forthwith tried by the parliament of France. Charles, taken by surprise, and unprejudiced by his mother, instantly promised his free sanction to an open trial; and himself fixing the time, and wishing the knight success, dismissed him with the most solemn assurances that justice, cost what it might, should be done.

Catherine's anger and alarm at this sudden and totally unexpected exposure of her favourite, was extreme; but consoling herself that the Huguenots' triumph would not be of long duration, she sent privately for Oswald, and bribed him to silence, concerning the sanction and support she had given to his villany from the first, by making him her confidant in her deeply laid plot against the sect which had cost her so much trouble, crime, anxiety and thought. Oswald was more than satisfied, and declared himself ready to appear when called upon, feeling that he could bear calmly the short-lived con-

tumely of the enemies, over whom he hoped soon to triumph. As the day drew near for the trial, intense interest concerning its issue, superseded the excitement occasioned by the splendid preparations for the marriage of Margaret of Valois. Huguenots and Catholics of the first rank thronged the Palais de Justice on the appointed day; and as the judges took their seats, Catherine and the king entered. Charles sat as a private spectator next to the Admiral Coligni, immediately below the throne; and opposite to them stood Oswald, with an haggard countenance and an eye of fire, looking contemptuously around, whilst by his side stood Victor, pale with mental suffering, yet firm in spirit, ready to endure any thing. The principal witnesses were Ferrand and Fulda: every thing which could tend to puzzle them was tried; but their separate statements were clear, minute, and exact in each point. Ferrand related how he and his father had been entrapped, and confined in the dungeon of Montreal; how they had, year after year, pined for liberty, seeing no individual but

Gasper de Comines, (who was a merciless dependant of Oswald's, nourishing a deep hatred to L'Intrepide, for some unpremeditated injury received by his hand, in early life,) and concluded by slightly touching on the circumstances attending his father's death; and his own subsequent escape. When he ceased, not a doubt of Oswald's guilt rested upon the minds of his most prejudiced friends. The king arose, and saluting the Black Knight as the Marquis d'Ostun, hinted to the judges that Oswald should be sentenced to die; and with an angry air, left the hall. As the king withdrew, Catherine and Oswald were observed to exchange looks. His sentence was not immediately pronounced, but he was ordered to be, for the present, confined in the Prison de la Force; and a few days after, as if to shew his entire satisfaction in the termination of the trial, Charles conferred upon Raymond d'Espernon a valuable domain with the title of Count. The Huguenots were fully gratified; they had nothing left to wish for; all seemed to breathe peace and security. The day was fixed for the

nuptials of the Prince of Bearn and the king's sister, when the sudden death of Jane d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, who had only arrived at Paris a few days before, to be present at the marriage of her son, swept like a poisonous wind over the full-blown hopes of the reformers; universal consternation prevailed amongst them, distrust revived; and, scarce doubting but that the high-spirited Queen had been poisoned, they determined to penetrate the mystery which involved her death. Coligni was at the Louvre when the appalling news was brought: Catherine started, and turning pale, exclaimed in a hurried voice, — "Coligni, the Huguenots will accuse me of this; but in the name of the mother of Jesus, I swear I am innocent."

"Madame, it is an awful event."

"Aye," rejoined Catherine," "let it be inquired into,—sift the matter to the bottom: the Huguenots in common justice cannot doubt me. Have I not for their sakes incurred the displeasure of the Holy Father in God, by urging

the union of my daughter with the prince of Bearn?

"Mother, he is King of Navarre, now," coolly interrupted Charles.

"Aye, King of Navarre,—but, Coligni, on you I must depend: let not this sudden and direful event rob us of peace, and Margaret of a husband."

"Margaret would not be sorry," again carelessly interrupted Charles; "for it is said, mother, that she dislikes the husband you have chosen for her."

"Do not believe him, Coligni: what he says is false; but if not, what then? Go and advise quickly with your friends and mine, and send to me the Marquis d'Ostun."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The marriage of Henry King of Navarre, with Margaret de Valois, was celebrated with a pomp and magnificence which at no former period had graced the nuptials of a Princess of France. Paris was involved in rejoicings, and the Queen mother determined that the ball which was to terminate the entertainments in honour of the bride, should outvie in splendour and delight any that had preceded it. It took place in the grand apartments of the new Palais de Tuilleries, then, for the first time, thrown open to receive the beauty and courtly gallantry of France. It presented an enchanting scene; all that could intoxicate the senses, or charm the mind in nature and in art appeared. Cool streams of air, charged with costly odours, poured refreshing

fragrance through the vast saloons; there were secluded grottos, and fountains inviting to soft melancholy the votaries of solitary thought; shadowy groves, in which was but just heard the distant music, deeply contrasted with the dazzling radiance beyond, where the brilliantly attired assembly arranged themselves in groups for dancing. Catherine appeared the presiding genius: she wore a robe, the colours of which vied with the rich Tyrian dye's purple refulgence; a resplendent crown rose immediately above her lofty brows, encircled with the device set in brilliants, "The soul should ever shine thus,—pleasing to all, but *for* one."—The duke of Alva was standing by her, when she paused at the statue of Cosmo de Medicis, and regarded it for several moments with proud interest: a slight colour diffused her cheeks, as, haughty with the recollection of the magnificent taste of her princely family, she slowly passed on, and mingling with the different groups, smiled with bewitching frankness upon all. She had laid aside the majestic grandeur of her deportment,

and alike fascinated both Catholic and Huguenot. Yet in the midst of all, how horrible were her thoughts! how dark her fixed purpose!—Raymond felt an indescribable feeling steal over him, as he gazed upon the graceful insinuating Queen. In this tumult of joy, a heavy gloom hung on his spirit: he dreaded he knew not what; yet he remarked, as with apparent carelessness he moved from room to room, that every statue, scattered among the various scenes, bore a device, which seemed, to his searching eye, to shadow forth something of horror. Could it be, that in the very halls where they laughed and danced, exulting in imagined peace, that aught fearful was planned to burst over the devoted Huguenots? "No, it cannot be," he half exclaimed aloud; and wishing to shake off the fearful impression, he turned to respectfully salute the beautiful Queen of Navarre, who was looked upon by the Huguenots as the safe-guard of their rights: she was seated on a low couch by her brother Charles, and although he was talking to her in a playful strain, she ap-

peared thoughtful, and melancholy. The wreath of orange flowers was in her hair, but she had thrown aside her magnificent bridal robe, and wore instead, a plain azure vest edged with gold. As Raymond approached, he observed that the King of Navarre, who had been standing by his bride, walked hastily and angrily away, as if sensibly annoyed by some observation she had made; and he paused, when he overheard Charles, in a low and severe voice, whisper, "Fool! you will teach him to hate you before the *time*."

He did not linger for Margeret's reply, but turned to observe a statue of St. Bartholomew, at the base of which was inscribed, "The faithful hold the sword." — Whilst Raymond was yet looking at the figure, thinking of Charles's emphatic words to the Queen of Navarre, Coligni approached, and passing his arm through Raymond's whispered, — "I too am but half-blinded; come with me." — Raymond made no reply; and Coligni conducted him under a ruined archway, overgrown with lichens and ever-

greens, into a most captivating scene, representing to life, a Florentine vintage, at the time of sunset:—some of the peasantry were dancing before their huts amidst the loud and laughing voices of children, who were gambolling like young kids about them; some were still busily employed carrying rich burdens of purple fruits; whilst others, in the distance, were presenting their votive offerings to an image of the Virgin, and chaunting the vesper hymn. Raymond stood enchanted with the scene, all looked so innocent and happy.—"And yet poison lurks here!" whispered Coligni.

"Aye," replied Raymond,—"it is all a fiction, there is no reality of happiness."

"You are too young, my friend, to think thus; but come this way, and tell me to what this alludes?" Raymond followed him into an exquisite grotto, where a Bacchus was represented standing on the edge of a wine press, and holding to his lips a cup, on which was written in Italian characters, "Health to our friends, death to our foes." Whilst they were only appa-

rently admiring the statue, which was a valuable specimen of Grecian art, Ferrand suddenly appeared from an unseen aperture, in a dark part of the grotto. Coligni, who was fearful of too hastily exciting the Marquis's suspicions, and also anxious to know his unbiassed impressions, said, pointing to the inscription, "We are all friends here, my lord."

"True," replied Ferrand. "Yet I wish, in the decorations of a festival given in honour of a union which is to cement our interests more closely, that the olive and the rose had been made to predominate over the cypress and the wind-flower. Look there: why should that springing Muse of dancing be crowned with half-blown, fading flowers, like early blighted hopes? and whilst she smiles with present joy, why does she point to her withered wreath, and the dark motto, 'The time approaches' — What time, I ask?"

"The time of death, my lord."

"Aye, so I guess."

"Nay, D'Espernon, you are too hasty: these

flowers and words convey a striking and a simple lesson contrasted with the life of the statue and the present gay scene: in the midst of human joy, sorrow and sickness hover near."

"True," replied Ferrand; but it is from sin, not from peace and joy, that sorrow springs. But come, we will see what is going on beyond."

They passed through the retired and dimly lighted cave, and pushing open a narrow door at the end, artfully made to represent a cascade, came at once into the brilliant ball room. The sudden light opposed to the gloom they had been so long accustomed to, proved too strong for their dilated sight, and compelled them to pause a few minutes before they could proceed; and then Raymond observed just within the entrance to the grotto, from the ball-room, a gracefully recumbent figure, personifying Sleep. "Some priest has had a hand here," he observed; "'One sound shall awake many.'"

"Ah!" interrupted Ferrand, in a low voice repeating the words, "'One sound shall awake many:' to what can that allude?"

"To the last day," replied Coligni; "read again, 'To sleep is not to die.'"

"Be it what it may," muttered Ferrand, "it is half-found; for we know that some deadly plot exists."

"Aye, let us separate before we are observed to be awake," whispered Coligni, in a low and hurried voice; "watch well, but with a careless air."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Duke of Alva, "who are those gallant strangers yonder, close by the statue of Cosmo de Medici? By my faith, they have the air of princes."

"I see but one leaning by the statue," replied the Duke of Guise, "and he is the crowned heretic of England's subjects; his name is Walter Ralegh."

"And his companion,—see, he talks to Raymond d'Espernon."

"Ah! he and the renegade, the new made Count, seem friends," muttered Guise.

"And why should they not be friends?" asked

Catherine; "they are both young and brave, they are of gentle blood, comely in person, and moreover, united in faith, and"—she paused, and lowering her voice to a whisper, added, "may be cut off together in the flower of their age."

"By the Holy Virgin! it were a sin," observed Alva. "Ralegh has the bearing of a noble youth."

"Aye, but he is of the condemned flock," rejoined the Queen. "See, Sidney bends lowly to us; my Lord of Guise, why do you stand so proudly? Shall the natives of the barbarous sea-girt land out-do my peers in courtesy? Return the salutation; show that you are a prince of Lorraine, show them that you are French."

The Duke of Guise obeyed, and bent lowly to the Englishmen; and as they disappeared to join the gay assembly in the ball-room, he angrily observed, "I and Ralegh met in the deadly fight of Dreux. Madame, I loathe these meetings of friends and foes; they chafe and sorely vex my spirit."

"Nay, Lorraine, have patience, and tell me how you like our mottos."

"Madame," replied Guise, bowing gravely, "methinks they shadow forth a tragedy too plainly. See, the admiral Coligni at this moment pauses beneath the statue of the avenging Michael."

"Ah! and what does he read?"

"Enough, Madame, to alarm the bravest: 'In one night a blast slew ten thousand!'"

"It is a riddle time will solve for the grey-headed chief," replied Catherine; "you go and amuse him meanwhile."

The Duke of Guise recoiled at Catherine's bantering air, exclaiming, "Yon aged rebel planned the murder of my father."

"Hush!" whispered the Queen, "what then? can ye not hide hate for one night? But frown no more at present, here comes the King."

Charles approached them as they stood by a couch, and flinging himself on it, he sighed deeply.

"What now?" asked Catherine.

"O ma chere Madame, Marie Etraques n'est elle pas ravissante ?"

"Non, mon fils."

"Non ? She is the perfection of youth ; I cannot turn my head away whilst she is in sight. O, she is like a blooming orange-tree, fragrant and fresh ; but hark ! the dancing has commenced. Guise, come and dance, — Coligni, come and dance." So crying, the giddy king started up, and disappeared amongst a crowd of beauties, whilst Catherine accepted the Duke of Alva's arm to conduct her to the ball-room. On the way, she whispered, "and how do *you* like our devices ?"

"That is the best," replied the Spaniard, pointing to the motto, "Silence is the daughter of prudence."

"Then you also think we have been too plain ?"

The Duke of Alva bowed, but making no other reply, the Queen continued, — "The Huguenots are dull ; they have no Spanish or Italian blood in their veins. See, my lord duke, they dance joyfully and lightly."

The moment Catherine entered the ball-room, Henry of Anjou hastened forward to meet her, and taking her hand, led her near a party of nine beautiful girls, who, with exquisite grace, were performing an intricate dance, called the "Dance of the Muses." The prince eagerly directed his mother's attention to by far the most elegant girl in the group, saying, "Mother, that is Renée de Rieux."

"Ah! what Mademoiselle de Chateauneuf?"

"Yes, madame, — she is to be my partner in the next dance. Ah! see what grace! is she not lovely?"

"She is pretty," replied Catherine, carelessly looking at Renée, who was a beauty of the most engaging rank; "but she wants something, Henry, — she looks like a rose without its green leaves, — aye!"

Henry, with an expression of disappointment, turned away, and Catherine silently remarked that in the pantomime which succeeded the dance of the muses, the young Princess of Condé, Mary of Cleves, played Thisbe to his Pyramus.

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"Come," said Ferrand, taking his brother's arm, "let us withdraw, I am weary of these sights and sounds."

"I am not," replied Raymond; "they shew me the phantom of those joys, which real, would delight me. I love to fancy Edessa is here, and try to cheat myself into the hope of seeing her fairy form, when the throng lessens."

"Nay, Raymond, think no more of her; we must see Coligni before we leave, — rouse yourself: Catherine's eye is upon us."

They walked carelessly through the crowded rooms, and often paused to listen to the music, or watch the dancers, as if no heavier thought pressed upon their minds. In the mean time Coligni was with the king, Henry of Navarre, and the Duke of Alva.

"Is not he the most miserable man, who torments himself?" asked Charles, addressing Henry.

"Yes, surely," replied Navarre; "but I am not my own idle tormentor, I have been deceived. Margaret hates me."

"Absurd!" exclaimed the king, "you expect too much, — but I will speak to her."

"Nay," cried Navarre, "it is too late now."

Charles did not heed his remark, but advanced immediately to the bride, who was talking lowly to the Duke of Guise, and taking her apart, with an air of determination and dignity the king conversed earnestly with her for some time. She listened in silence but with apparent concern; and Navarre, who was anxiously watching them, observed to Coligni, "This marriage will not befriend us."

"Not if your majesty is indiscreet."

"What can I do, Coligni? Seeing that Margaret loves me not, I am full of doubt; remembering that in her veins the blood of La Valois and De Medicis flows, may I not expect deceit? O! my mind, through disappointment, is in a state of uncertainty, leaving me the victim of every impression, slight or great."

"King Charles told you but now," replied Coligni, "who was the most miserable man: I could, who is the most peaceful."

"Speak on, my friend," said Henry.

"He, sire, who has courage to do his best, and patience to endure the worst, destroying not his present vigor in the anticipation of evils which may never come."

Henry of Navarre was silent for several moments, and then thoughtfully approached his Queen, and Charles. The instant she perceived him, she arose, and taking a flower from her bosom, pressed it to her lips, and bending low, presented it to her husband. Raymond turned away; a faintness stole over him, and he hurried apart from the busy scene, to sit alone in a low grotto, close by a murmuring brook. The thought of Edessa, pining in the dull cloister without the springing hope of an awakened christian, to support her, oppressed his heart, until he was suddenly roused by the sound of approaching voices. Too listless to move, he remained in his seclusion, wishing not to be discovered, till his attention was excited by the deep-toned voice of Alva, in answer to the almost whispered accents of the Duke of Guise, who had

remarked that the Marquis d'Ostun looked thoughtful as he withdrew.

"The mottos have alarmed them," said Alva; "the time must be urged; it is known to too many."

Raymond had heard enough; and walking from the grotto, was about to pass on, when Guise, full of alarm, started before him, crying, "Spy! what hast thou heard?"

Raymond stopped, and looking haughtily at Guise, demanded to whom he spoke.

"I spoke to a traitor, — to you, Raymond, Count of Meaux!"

Raymond, without deigning to reply, instantly drew his sword, and challenged his slanderer to single combat. Guise promptly accepted his defiance; they had but just commenced their deadly combat, when the king, alarmed by Alva, appeared, hastening towards them, and commanding them to separate, — reluctantly they obeyed, and exchanging furious looks, withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"It is madness to believe longer in the sincerity of the court," exclaimed the Marquis d'Ostun, the second morning after the grand fête, as he and the Admiral Coligni were returning from the Louvre; "Catherine, the king, Alva, and Guise, all try to conceal their hatred to us and our party; therefore are more deeply dangerous."

"What then do you advise?" asked Coligni.

"That we, without further delay, retire to Chatillon,—the Huguenots will quickly understand why, and follow us."

"Ferrand, you alarm yourself needlessly: to what purpose should we fly?"

"Ah! have you forgotten all the devices of the fête? and can you tell me why we are so caressed, and urged to take up our abode at the Louvre?"

"Let those fly who fear," replied Coligni, with a shudder: "I will await the worst, for to me there is nothing more horrible than civil war. If we retreat, it must follow; the sighs of my countrymen I cannot bear; they have pierced my heart too often. 'I would rather be dragged bleeding through the streets of Paris than see kindled another war.'"

Ferrand made no reply, he saw that the admiral was sufficiently alarmed, and they walked on in silence until they came by the cloisters of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, when Coligni withdrawing his arm from Ferrand's, took from his pocket a paper, and slackening his pace, began to read out to him the entreaty he had a few days before received from the inhabitants of Rochelle, not to trust too explicitly to the affirmed good intentions of the Court. "Ah! they see as I see," observed Ferrand, who was a little in the advance, but the words were scarcely breathed, when the report of an harquebuss, fired from the opposite side of the street, made him start round, and spring to Coligni, who had staggered,

wounded, a few paces back. His left arm hung broken by his side; but without betraying the slightest emotion, he calmly pointed, ed, with his right hand streaming with blood, to the house from which the assassin had fired, saying, "Le coup vient de la."

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The frightful report that Coligni was murdered, spread rapidly through the capital; the alarmed Huguenots flocked to his Hotel, exhibiting the utmost consternation, and could scarcely be persuaded that he was still living. All felt that it was the first breathing of the approaching storm. Confidence was entirely broken, and no efforts of the Court could again restore it. This it plainly saw, and determined to act accordingly. A hasty council was held by the excited Calvinists in Coligni's bed-chamber, and they urged him to consent to the only step now feasible. to be carried by force, in in case of opposition, to his strong castle of Chatillon. But he would not consent to open violence; and it was at length agreed to blind

the Court, by feigning to be satisfied by its alleged ignorance of the assassination, whilst they secretly planned to carry off Coligni, when all should seem again calm. John de Ferrieres, Vidame of Chartres, and Raymond, Count of Meaux, were accordingly appointed to make the necessary arrangements, and in the dead of the coming night to give the signal when all was ready. — *Alas! the dead of the coming night!*

Charles was playing at tennis, with the Duke of Guise, and Tavannes, when the news of Coligni's assassination was brought to him by Francois de Monins, a Huguenot gentleman, who had been dispatched by the admiral to inform the King of the treacherous event: Charles, stamping with with rage, cried, "Shall I never be at peace?" and uttering the most horrid oaths and imprecations, he hastened to Catherine, and bursting into her chamber, cried, "Here are new troubles, madame! the foul fiend has instigated some fool to fire at Coligni; the Huguenots will be in arms, and then, all our fine schemes are frustrated!"

"We will go to the Admiral," said Catherine, with the utmost calmness, "and soon quiet the suspicions of his party."

"You must go alone, mother; I cannot again behold the mild expression of his open brow,—he has a look I cannot bear."

"What! fear a dying man's reproachful glance!— Pshaw!" said the Queen, rising from her seat, "You must go, Charles, or truly our fine plans are frustrated."

Charles felt that he dared not hesitate, and prepared to meet with calmness the injured man, whom, in spite of every thing, he could not but revere. When they entered his chamber, all who were present left the apartment, save Henry of Navarre, and the Marquis d'Ostun, whilst the Queen, with well feigned interest, approached the bed, and bending over Coligni, inquired minutely the extent of his wounds, deploring in strong language the mysterious accident.

"Madame, it was no accident," replied Coligni, severely regarding her. "O! may I be the first, the last victim of this treachery. My hairs

are grey more with sorrow than with time. My brow is furrowed with care's deepest lines; and my eyes are dim with the secret tears I have wept, over the victims of a blind and superstitious zeal: but my heart is not chilled, I can forgive the wrongs I suffer, and again intreat you to protect those you have sworn to shelter, and leave me to die in peace."

Catherine made no reply, and seating herself by a table, she rested her head upon her hand, whilst Charles, sinking upon his knees by Coligni, exclaimed, "O my Father, I am not your enemy. As I hope for mercy, I know nothing of this foul deed. My own guards shall henceforth protect you, and I will revenge this injury surely and deeply."

"Much time has been already lost," exclaimed Catherine, looking reproachfully at the King of Navarre: "before this, the assassin should have been dragged to justice; the gates of Paris shall instantly be shut lest he escape us."

"The Duke of Guise, can inform your majesty where his slave is," replied Navarre, with

a sarcastic smile. — "But hear me, madame, if the gates of Paris be shut, every Huguenot within, will take up arms to force them open; aye, and I will head them."

"Peace, peace!" murmured Coligni.

"Nay," interrupted Navarre, "shall we rest pent up here, to be tamely murdered? — No, by heaven! we will fight for the lives, justice and honour cannot secure to us."

"Fye on thee, cousin of Navarre!" cried Catherine: "is not my daughter your Queen? conduct her here, and let her wait upon the man both you and I revere: or if it please you better, I myself will stay and watch by him; the King shall guard him; I and he will do aught you will, so that you believe in our anxious care for him and you."

"Mother," replied Navarre, "if my doubts be unjust, I pray you pardon them. Coligni wants no surer guard than the love of his friends."

"He bien," said Catherine, "do as you please: farewell, Coligni, till we meet again." So saying, she slowly left the apartment, and Charles, after

taking an affectionate leave, reiterating again and again his promises of protection, with reluctant steps followed the Queen.

Within two hours of their departure, Coligni's house was strewed with salt. Charles thereby denounced him a traitor. Coligni was long in believing the monstrous fact, and from that moment gave himself up for lost. Too feeble to make any personal exertion, he resigned himself to his fate, feeling sure that his end was fast approaching. He knew his would be a cruel death, and with manly firmness prepared to meet it. The evils his sagacity foresaw embittered his thoughts; but he calmly gave his instructions to Ferrand, who was alone with him at this trying moment. "The Vidame of Chartres and Raymond should have given the signal before this," he muttered in a suppressed voice.

"It would be in vain. I could not escape," replied Coligni: "this morning, by following your advice, I might have fled from my enemies; now it is too late; but God knows why I tarried, and his will be done! Fear and sorrow,

my friend, are earthly storms, and I feel that the grace of my Almighty Father is lifting me above them. But listen, Ferrand, and whilst peace is granted to me, write what I shall dictate."

Ferrand in silent anguish took a pen and some paper, and commanding his highly wrought feelings, signified that he was ready to inscribe Coligni's last will.

"My soul is God's, and my body belongs to the grave," exclaimed the pious sufferer, as he raised himself in bed; "but to my country I bequeath my fame; my poor virtues to the memory of my friends; my goods to the needy, and my forgiveness to my enemies."

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The eve was still and sultry. Paris was wrapped in an unnatural, breathless repose. "Why did not Raymond come?" His anxious brother walked to an open window and looking into the street, listened for the expected signal; but no sound broke the stern silence of the dense and heavy air. Drops of anguish burst from his eyes, and pressing his hand to his damp brow, he

trembled with foreboding agony. There was a low distant murmuring: Ferrand hung out of the window to learn its meaning, but all was again hushed. "This silence," he whispered, "is horrible! the fearful calm before a storm; the stupor of delirium, — the gasp before the shrill cry of death.—Ah! what signal is that?—It is the knell of death, sending its deep-toned notes of horror trembling through the air!"

CHAPTER XL.

"Remember, I have not consented," whispered Charles, as he stalked into the dimly lighted apartment of the Louvre, where Catherine was talking with the Cardinal of Lorraine and the dark-minded Chancellor John de Morvilliers.

Catherine advanced to the spot where the King stood, pale, and trembling with the anticipated horrors of remorse. "To-night," she emphatically whispered, "the Huguenots design to carry off Coligni."

"Would to God they had already carried him beyond his murderers. I cannot command this slaughter. O, mother! urge me not to disregard the tears which fall from eyes so like our own."

"Out on thee, craven-hearted king! what do I ask of thee, but to save your own life and serve the true Church? Why, did you not see Clermont de Piles when, at the head of five hundred Hu-

guenots, he came to demand Mourevel, the assassin of Coligni, swearing to take no other hostage for Guise's creature, than the King of France?"

"Shall these murders be?" cried the king, totally disregarding Catherine's question; "shall these murders be? Demon of cruelty, avaunt!"

"Charles, belie me not, — am I cruel? Do I more than act the part fate has assigned to me? — Call around thee, as I have done, the famed seers of Italy and France, and they will tell thee the Huguenots must fall. — What must be, will be, spite of weakness, tears, or remorse."

"There is no time to deliberate: the climax is arrived," exclaimed De Morvilliers, with considerable warmth. "Our plot to-night shall triumph, or theirs to-morrow."

The Cardinal of Lorraine laid his hand upon the King's arm, as he stood in an amazement of dread, and in solemn accents said, "Hesitate no longer, my son: seize the advantage God has given to you. It is not the mere rigour of policy but also pure mercy, and actual duty due to the faithful, to rid them of these rebellious heretics."

Charles shook off Lorraine's hand, and shrinking back, cried, — "'Then if it must be, let it be done quickly: take care that not one escape to reproach me!'"

Retz, who was present on hearing this, advanced to leave the room, when Charles guessing his design, sprang towards him, crying, "Stay, stay,—not yet, —it shall not be to-night."

"Catherine rushed forward to prevent the distracted King from forcibly detaining Retz, and half dragging him to an open window, exclaimed, "Wavering fool! will you tarry for the Huguenots to glut their rage upon you, upon me, on all? Will you hesitate till they rush in to witness your cowardice and deride your weakness? Spare them, and die!"

Charles frowned darkly, and waving his hand in silence, leant out of the window, and gazed intently on the pure waters of the Seine, which rolled beneath the palace. Cold drops fell from his contracted brow, and the paleness of death rested on his fixed and distorted features, till the signal—the deep-toned fatal signal vibrated through the suffocating air. Uttering a low cry,

he withdrew from the window, and fell gasping upon the floor. There was a pause — a horrid silence, — even Catherine turned pale, and leaning forward, seemed as though she dreaded to hear, whilst she listened for the sounds of death.

The tumult that followed—the cries of dismay and fury were awful. The Queen of Navarre rushed half-dressed into the room, crying, "O Charles! my brother! the guards are turned traitors: they murder all they meet!"

"Away!" cried Catherine: "go to bed, fool!

"Ha! ha!" laughed Charles. "Margaret, where is your husband? He is a Huguenot, take care that he do not escape."

At that moment the voice of Henry of Navarre was heard in the anti-room, demanding to see the King. His voice filled the unhappy Charles with new terror. — "Keep him out," he cried: "Margaret, stand by the door,— hide me, mother! I cannot see Navarre, —hide me,— hide me!"

But Henry, defying opposition, had forced his way, and flinging open the door, stood on the threshhold fixing his eyes, furious with the dire-

ful conflict of his thoughts, upon Charles. "O deeply perjured King!" he cried, "what means this slaughter?"

"That you will soon understand," said Catherine, stepping between Charles and Navarre; "but in the mean time, if you value your life, be patient, no harm shall befall you."

"Patient!" interrupted Henry, his eyes flashing fire as he spoke,—"patient whilst you play false as hell!" Then turning to Charles, he continued, "Follow me, and command the murderers to cease, or defend yourself,—one of us shall fall!"

"Stop!" screamed Margaret, "there's blood enough without,—there's blood enough without!" but Charles, roused to passion, thrust her back, crying, "One of us shall fall, give me my sword!"

Catherine quickly brought it to him; but before he could unsheath it, the Marechal de Tavannes, followed by a company of the King's guard, entered, and instantly seized Navarre, and dragged him, struggling with rage and despair, to the deepest dungeon of the Louvre.

Charles, who had been forcibly detained whilst Henry was made prisoner, seemed transported with sudden rage against the Huguenots. "Curse on them!" he cried, "they shall all perish.—Nevers, bring me arms, I will fire upon them as they try to escape, before the moon goes down. See, mother! they fly along the borders of the river."

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Covered with dust and blood, Ferrand, as he was thrust into the apartment, fixed his eyes upon Catherine's guilty countenance, with an expression of abhorrence and reproach, which she could then ill bear.

"Why is he brought here?" she demanded, "why is *he* saved?"

"Madame," replied Tavannes, "a simple death were too merciful for so black a traitor. From the fragment of a paper found in his breast I have discovered a plot to assassinate your majesty, and I know not who besides."

"Bring the rack!" cried Catherine: "he shall confess his plot, ere he die." She was promptly obeyed, and amidst the confused din of distant shrieks, the report of fire-arms, the splashing of

water, imprecations, and dreadful cries, Ferrand was tied to the rack. The detested Catherine stood taunting by, and Charles in silence gazed upon his tortures, bound by a dread spell of fascination. Tavannes, and the Duke of Anjou, who had so often met the noble knight amidst the less horrid din of battle, turned away in pity; whilst the cold-blooded Cardinal of Lorraine knelt by the victim of mad cruelty, and holding a crucifix before him, in solemn accents urged him to confess. But Ferrand did not breathe a sigh. The pallid hue of death spread over his countenance, and at times, the slight convulsive movement of his limbs betrayed the pangs of his suffering body; but his faithful soul rose above the world, fixing on his features an impress of its serene beauty: his eyes, shining with meek dignity, were bent upon the ebony cross Lorraine held; but no groan expressed the misery of tortured nature. Charles turned faint at this sight of the soul's triumph, and crying out, "*He has no vileness to confess,*" he motioned to the guards to unbind their prisoner,

and take him hence. "Dispatch him!" whispered Catherine to Tavannes.

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Slowly dawned the morning of that night of death. The first faint rays of purple twilight fell on sights of deep horror; the red waters of the Seine,—the haggard King watching, from the windows of his palace, the murdered bodies as they floated by. His voice was hoarse and broken. "Look here, mother!" he cried, "see! there is a woman with her infant flying towards the Fauxbourg St. Germain, shall I fire?"

"Turn this way," whispered Catherine; "see what your brother has to shew."

Charles withdrew from the window, and beheld Henri d'Angoulesme, his face and hands impurpled with gore, holding by its silver locks the ghastly head of the slaughtered Coligni. Charles staggered backwards; he strove in vain to turn his head or eyes away; in vain he tried to raise his stiffening arm to hide the hideous sight from his distended eyeballs, till, mute with horror, he fell headlong upon the floor.

CHAPTER XLI.

Who can tell how many died that night and the three following?

Raymond was among the few who were saved by the compassion of the master of the artillery, the Marechal de Biron. On the fourth evening, when the carnage had nearly ceased for lack of victims, the generous Biron urged Raymond to stay no longer in a place so full of danger.

"Whither shall I fly?" asked Raymond: "where are my friends?"

"The Marquis, your brother, still lives; leave him to my care, he will be safer by your absence; for the Duke of Guise remembering your challenge at the bridal fête, has commanded a strict search to be made for you among the living and the dead. I will persuade him that you are slain whilst in the disguise I have prepared,

you fly to England : you will find friends enough there, and your brother will soon, with my aid, follow."

Raymond offered no opposition to this faithful advice, and soon afterwards Biron conducted him to the concealment where Ferrand lay, covered with wounds, received in his resistance on St. Bartholemew's eve. Both were exhausted with a fever of the mind, and they met, and parted, with the silent apathy of hopeless, broken spirits.

The sun had just set, when Raymond left the darkly stained city. Music echoed through the murky streets, — shouts of joy filled the air, — assassins danced in triumph, — bigotry darkly smiled, — and superstition, flinging aside her fears, looked upwards for a crown of glory. — Shuddering at the loud discordant laugh, and impious song Raymond fled onward, not knowing where to bend his steps. Alone, forlorn in spirit, dejected and faint, at midnight, he found himself entangled in the narrow tracts of a thick wood; exhausted by the speed of his

flight, he sat under a tree, and for a time gave way to the melancholy thoughts which the gloomy shade made still more sad, weeping bitterly, he extended his hands towards heaven, crying, "Coligni is dead, and thy people, O my God, are slain!"

At length a troubled sleep stole over him; and whilst he lay stretched upon the bare earth, memory revived in terrific visions the scenes he had so lately witnessed: the air was filled with deafening sounds, and he beheld anew the struggles of the gallant Rochefoucault, till he sunk overpowered by his murderers; and then again Raymond felt the strangling grasp upon his throat as he attempted to aid his friend. Starting from the ground, he uttered a shrill cry, rolling his eyes wildly around: but the shades of night hung over him, and save the sighing of the trees, there was no sound but his own wild cry of fear. The remembrance of his desolate state burst upon him, and falling to the earth, he sought to occupy his spirit in prayer to that Saviour who can make his faithful servants "hope against

hope." His mind was greatly composed by its healthful exercise of prayer; and with the first appearance of light, he prepared to leave the wood: as he emerged from its darkness, a wide view opened upon him, which he well knew. Immediately below, was the little hamlet, La Bouquet, where he and Edessa had passed the happy summers of their childhood; to the right in solemn grandeur stood the grey monastery of St. Gervase, surrounded by its luxuriant gardens, which wafted the fragrance of their varied fruits and flowers far up the vine-clad hills above. Raymond looked around, and paused to think of the past. Many years, marked by the sad train of events which had left him lonely upon the earth, had glided down the stream of time since his eye had dwelt upon the scene now stretched before him:—he remembered how rich in beauty it had seemed to his every sense, when the bounding illusions of youth played round his heart; but now, when fancy no longer bewildered reason, how changed was the view! In yonder gothic pile he beheld a throne of su-

perstition: in the hamlet, a den of ignorance. "Alas!" he mentally ejaculated, "to see things as they really are, is often sad. O! how did I dream of happiness here, and how bitterly have I since learnt that life's enjoyments are vain and delusive."

With a hurried step, he advanced a few paces, striking his breast as if he would stifle the rising thoughts, and still the throbbings of that heart, whose pangs were soon to cease. Though then strong in life, Raymond d'Espernon felt as one about soon to die, and leaning against a tree, he pressed his hand to his aching head, and thinking of his last hour, asked his awakened soul what was its hope?—on what it would rest in the last moment of mortal life, when bidding adieu to the world, it should leave the body pale and lifeless? "O my Father!" he murmured, "how long have I resisted the knocking of thy Spirit: and now thou hast called me, amidst the loud thundering of thy severest providence. O Lord! I am thine, I am thine."

Two horsemen at this moment, suddenly

emerged from the wood, and immediately galloped up to the spot where Raymond was still meditating : — he started when he recognised in the foremost the implacable Duke of Guise, who, springing from his charger, cried, in a low voice of smothered rage, "Raymond d'Espernon, there is no meddling monarch here, — defend yourself!"

CHAPTER XLII.

In one of the fragrant bowers in the rich gardens of the monastery of St. Gervase, sat a youthful nun, gazing on the wood-clad heights before her. An expression of thought shaded her pensive countenance, but the tenderness of gratitude beamed in her full expressive eyes, and she felt the luxury of solitude, whilst clasping to her breast the unsullied word of God, and listening to the full bursting sounds of praise, with which the happy woodland birds made the morning air resound. The approach of the Lady Abbess of St. Gervase, caused for a few moments a visible change in the manner of the nun; a bright colour rushed into her cheeks, and she seemed at a loss where to conceal her valued

bible; but hiding her distress, she hastily hid the book behind a crucifix in the arbour, and advanced to meet the abbess, who was a tall and dignified woman, slightly bent with age, but shewing in her penetrating eyes, an unsubdued energy of spirit. "The holy church," she said, crossing herself, as she passed the crucifix," will soon be purged from her foes. Rejoice with me, my daughter, at the glorious triumph which the energetic faith has gained over its enemies:— the fold of the heretic is broken, — utterly destroyed."

The nun immediately concluded that the Huguenots had been again defeated in battle, and bending her eyes to the ground, replied in a scarcely audible voice, "A persecuting spirit is not from above."

"You are weak in the faith," answered the abbess, with some asperity, "or you would behold the mercy of what you dare to call persecution."

"Mother, tell me, is there mercy in driving the heretic from his peaceful home, to torture

and to death? O it would be merciful to urge, all that tender love may urge, to bring them to Christ, and leave the rest to God."

"The church has reasoned with them, but they are mad in their heresies, and she can only hope to conquer, by enforcing the truths they impiously deny."

"Force has no part with the religion Jesus taught," replied the nun: "and the sublime Apostle Paul, when he became a christian, ceased to be a persecutor. Knowing the torments prepared for hardened sinners, he laboured with untired zeal for their repentance; and feeling, through faith, the blessings of eternity, with unwearied love he sought to lead others to taste the fullness of his joy in Christ."

The Lady Abbess coloured with astonishment and anger. — "Are you turned heretic?" she cried; "and do you deny that to be the depth of true mercy, which seeks to save, be it by the fire, the dungeon or the rack, the rebels to the faith. Shall we behold them hanging by the frail thread of life, over the gaping mouth of

hell, and not snatch them, though it be with violence, from the torments of eternity?"

"O mother! can an arm of flesh snatch a sinner from the portals of eternal death?" asked the nun.

The Abbess made no reply, and a sister at that moment hastily presented herself, saying, "Father Thadée bid me hurry to inform our mother, that two strangers have just left a young soldier dangerously wounded at the outer gate."

As the Lady Abbess left the arbour, the nun laid her hand upon Colda's arm, and eagerly asked her if she had seen the wounded man."

"No," replied Colda; "but doubtless it is some unfortunate Huguenot whom the vengeance of heaven has overtaken, though he escaped the dreadful massacre at Paris."

"A dreadful massacre at Paris!"

"Have you not heard of it? A messenger arrived this morning from the Cardinal of Lorraine to our Lady Abbess with a full account of its horrors.— On the eve of St. Bartholomew the slaughter of the Huguenots began, and only

ended a day since: it is said few escaped, and thousands fell: Coligni, the renowned Black Knight, and all of note, save the young Prince of Condé and Henry of Navarre, who are kept prisoners at the Louvre."—A low gasping cry interrupted Colda, and she ran to support the woe-striken and fainting nun.

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It was in the dead of the night, when Edessa with a noiseless step left her cell, and hurried through the low passages of the monastery to the apartment where the wounded soldier lay. She stopped on the threshhold, and holding in her breath, listened to the low murmuring sighs which alone broke the deep silence of the hour. She advanced to his low pallet, and saw that his lips moved in prayer, whilst his breast heaved as though life were ebbing. Long she gazed upon his calm features, her hands clasped in the attitude of prayer, and the big drops of anguish standing upon her brow, feeling sure that death was hovering over all she had loved on earth. But in her deep agony, she turned to heaven

for help, calmly whispering, "O my Raymond! kiss, ere you die, the cross of Christ our Lord."

He started, and for a moment his eyes shone bright in life, and taking from her hand the Bible she held, he feebly pressed it to his lips, with his expiring breath murmuring, "My Edessa, adieu! O merciful Jesus, have mercy upon me!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

CATHERINE de Medicis' thirst for power nothing on earth could satisfy. When Charles, in the flower of his age, lay stretched upon his death-bed, the unnatural parent felt no compassion for his sufferings, but was only anxious to secure to herself the regency until her darling son Henry should return from Poland to take his brother's crown. The King, disgusted with the hardness and pride of her heart, long obstinately refused to sign the necessary document which would empower her to act immediately on his demise before Henry's arrival in France. Charles, who had dragged on two years of sorrow and suffering since the fatal eve of St. Bartholomew, now felt that his end was fast approaching. He had often long interviews with his cousin Henry of Navarre, and was entirely waited on by his Protestant nurse, Fulda. The anniversary of

the dreadful day drew near, and the King, who could never forget its horrors, grew weaker in body, and more distressed in mind as it approached: but the impatient Queen, fearing that he would die before he had signed what she had desired, approached his bed to solicit him, on the very eve of St. Bartholomew. Charles remembered the day, and turned from his mother with dread. "Do you come to witness my heavy grief to night? he asked. "Come, then, just before the moon goes down, when my pangs are deepest."

"Have you seen Fulda of late?" asked the Queen, anxious to change the subject of his thoughts.

"Aye, I have, and she tells me that in vain is he tempted to commit evil who fears his God. Mother! who was my tempter?"

"The devil," replied Catherine angrily, turning from Charles' fixed look.

"Ah! then he is here: see! see! the lights burn blue."

Catherine started, and threw a hurried glance around the almost dark apartment, and Charles

in a low solemn tone of voice again asked, "Mother, who was my tempter to evil?"

"Why ask me?" cried the Queen; "you knew what was right: blame your own soul if ye did not will it; if sin sits heavy on you, bear its curse, nor like a coward shrink! Your hours are numbered. Once more I ask you to sign this paper; it is the last favour you can grant to me."

"Madame, my people have endured much of evil from my hands: I will not leave them a curse as a legacy: let them do as they will till Henry returns, and you, hoary-headed woman! think no more of dominion and power: repent, repent of your sins!"

"Does repentance bring peace?—are you happy?" asked Catherine with a bitter smile. "Talk not to me of repentance: sign this paper, and weep till you die. Shall I now learn to fear death? No; I have seen too much to heed its blackness."

"Can ye not then feel for my living pangs, and leave me to sigh alone?"

"Know ye not," replied Catherine, turning

pale as she spoke, "that I have long been past feeling?" She arose and walked in silence to the door.

"Stay!" gasped Charles. "O my mother! bid me farewell."

She turned her head, and with an unmoved eye witnessed his strong emotion: to his outstretched arms and entreating look, she bent her head, and smiling bitterly, said, "Farewell!"

"O give me the paper, — I will sign it," cried Charles, half-rising in the bed. She brought it to him, and for the last time he signed his name. Long he looked at the feebly traced characters, and sinking back upon his pillow, whispered as he gave back the paper, "Now mother, do not give to me a *cup like that ye gave to my brother Francis.*"

Catherine started, and an involuntary scream burst from her. Grasping the paper, she staggered out of the room, muttering, "Father Anthony a traitor! *he only* could have breathed it."

* * * * * * *

"Aye, I pray, if penitential sighs be prayers.

O Fulda, great is my horror! The scene of the last slaughter haunts me. Sleeping or waking I behold their agony and hear their cries."

"Yours is a sorrowful, a broken spirit; therefore I would have ye hope in the love of Christ. He breathed not the terrors of the law to the poor broken-hearted penitent who fell at his feet, and bathed them with her tears of anguish; but to her rent soul he gave reviving cordial, saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven.'"

"O! Fulda, but I have wasted the Church of Christ, how can I look up to him: how can I hope for his mercy?"

"He, in dying, forgave his murderers," whispered Fulda, as she hung over the expiring monarch, and wiped the large drops of mental anguish from his pale brow. The weariness of life, — the faintness of death, — stole over him: and clasping the cross, with an expiring penitential sigh, the ill-fated Charles closed his eyes upon the world.

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Catherine de Médicis

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